A MARVEL MONTHLY

Vol.1 No.11 50p

STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND COMICS

JAMES BOND
SPECIAL EFFECTS EXCLUSIVE

THE HUMANOID
BEHIND THE SCENES

INSIDE
STAR TREK
THE MOTION PICTURE

THINGS TO COME
THE 1936 SF CLASSIC

Bakshi's LORD OF THE RINGS

MOVIE REVIEW

DARTH WHO?
see page 25

$2.25

Starburst sf Classics featuring Things to Come (1936) ~ see page 4

STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND COMICS

Volume 1, Number 11

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Yes, you're not imagining things! This is a new issue, only three weeks since **Starburst 10** hit the newsagents. And you're right in thinking it was only three weeks before that when you first saw **Starburst 9**. Yet our cover corner emblem proudly pronounces us to be a Marvel *Monthly*. Perhaps explanations are in order . . .

Regular readers may recall our somewhat erratic early 1979 issues, one even appearing over a full month late. In fact, that mishap so worried readers that we were innundated with letters of concern, and even complaints about late delivery. So here's where we set the record straight.

Because of industrial action, we couldn't get our Christmas (number 5) issue out until February 1979! Other than the obvious problems that created, with news, reviews and interviews appearing late, it also meant we'd be unable to give you twelve issues this year.

Though, with all the great material scheduled to appear, there was no way we'd be able to cram it into ten, or even eleven, issues. So, we took the challenge . . . twelve 1979 issues you expect and twelve you'll get!

Which really means you don't have to wait four or five weeks between issues, only three!

Satisfied now?

Dez Skinn.

Dez Skinn/Editor.

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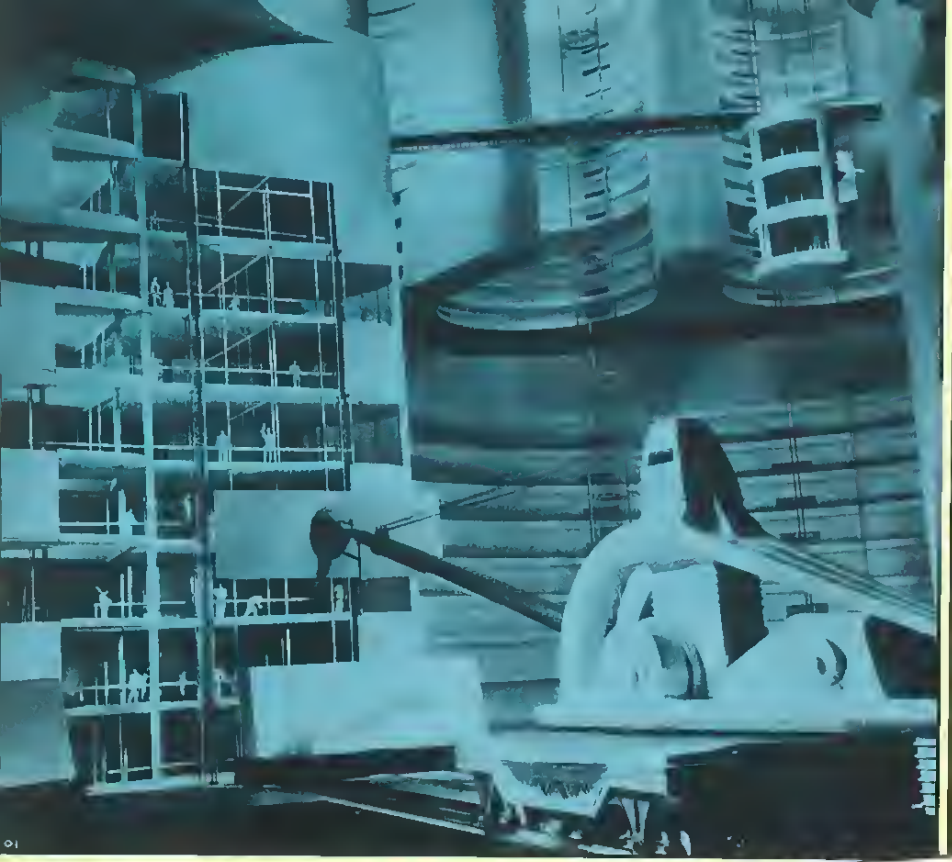


H.G. WELLS'
THINGS TO COME
An ALEXANDER KORDA Production
RAYMOND MASSEY · RALPH RICHARDSON
CEDRIC HARDWICKE · MARGARETTA SCOTT
JOHN CLEMENTS
Directed by
WILLIAM CAMERON MENZIES
Re-released by British Lion
British Lion Film Corporation Ltd, 76-78 Wardour St., London, W.1.

Starburst sf Classics

THINGS TO COME

Feature by Leone Edwards

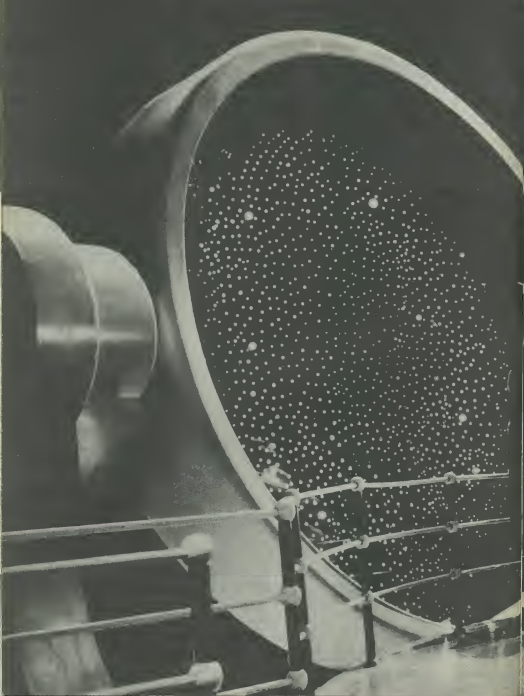
Ever since Fritz Lang's **Metropolis** (1926) astounded filmgoers around the world with its displays of large-scale special effects, other countries have attempted to duplicate its majesty and breadth of vision, in both physical appearance and profundity of message. The USA forgot the message and brought out **Just Imagine** (1930), an absurdist futuristic musical melodrama, which despite some effects rivalling those of **Metropolis**, gave itself over to sub-Vaudevillian humour. Germany tried to capture an international market with **FP1 Does Not Answer** (1932) about a floating mid-Atlantic city.

Alexander Korda began making films in Budapest during World War I, and by the age of twenty-five was considered the star producer of Hungary. He soon moved to Vienna and then in 1926 went to Hollywood. There his affairs went sadly awry, his marriage collapsed and he lost his savings in the Wall Street crash. He returned to Europe where his career took a turn for the better, and in 1931 moved to London where he formed London Films.

Two years later he was presented with his golden opportunity to move into the international science fiction market when H. G. Wells published his latest fantasy novel, *The Shape of Things to Come*. The film rights were immediately snapped up by Korda, who saw it as a prestige product to show the rest of the world what a British studio could produce. Part of the deal stipulated that Wells himself would write the screenplay which created many problems during production.

The story opens in Everytown (a thinly-disguised London), on Christmas Eve 1940. Mingled with the festivities are rumours of war. An unexpected air attack initiates a

Top left: *The building of a new world. The miniatures were designed by Korda and Menzies and executed by Ned Mann.* Top right: *Director of* **Things to Come**, *William Cameron Menzies.* Opposite below: *The British poster for the film.* Left: *Vincent Korda and the father of science fiction, H. G. Wells (right), discuss* **Things to Come** *production sketches.* Above: *The table-top miniature of the fabulous space gun. The tiny figures are mounted on separate moving walkways.*



war which lasts for thirty years. As a result the ruined world is reduced to barbarism and banditry and the Wandering Sickness, which turns its victims into near zombies, runs rampant. The scene shifts to Everytown 1970 which is ruled by the tyrannical Boss (*Ralph Richardson*), who urges his subjects on to further wars for the honour of their land. An envoy, John Cabal (*Raymond Massey*), arrives from out of the East in an aeroplane. He is the leader of World Communications, "a Brotherhood of Scientists and a Freemasonry of Efficiency", with its headquarters at Basra. Its task is to end brigandage, destroy independent states and create a New World State. Cabal is taken prisoner by the Boss but a young mechanic he meets escapes Everytown and flies to Basra. He alerts the World Airmen who make an aerial attack on Everytown, bombing it with the Gas of Peace, which puts people to sleep, apparently harmlessly, and renders these who breathe it completely docile when they wake up.

The scene then shifts 66 years into Everytown's future, a silent white underground future of glass, steel and electricity, air-conditioned and artificially unlit, where helicopters and television are commonplace. This new Everytown is ruled by Oswald Cabal (John's grandson, again played by Massey). All the economic, social and political problems of old seem to have been resolved and work, as the old world knew it, has disappeared. All interest is centred on technology and the Space Gun, which is designed to fire passenger-carrying projectiles at the moon. A rebellious attack led by a sculptor, Theotocopulos (*Cedric Hardwicke*), attempts to thwart the lunar expedition, but the attack fails and the Space Gun is fired, carrying two young volunteers. The film ends with Cabal exhorting his New World to ever greater progress and adventure. For mankind, he says, it must be "the Universe or nothing".

The film went into production in 1934, with a budget of £350,000, at that time the highest budget of any film produced in Britain. Along with **Metropolis** and **Just Imagine**, it is one of the best examples of filmic art deco. It is, in effect, a movie to be enjoyed for its look rather than for its heavy-handed message of what may befall mankind should we forget about the individual and concentrate on scientific achievement.

The director of **Things to Come**, William Cameron Menzies, began his film career in New Jersey in 1917 at the age of nineteen, through a chance meeting with director, George Fitsmaurice. After designing for a Mary Pickford film he met Douglas Fairbanks, and between 1921 and 1924 worked closely with Fairbanks on **The Three Musketeers**, **Robin Hood** and **Thief of Bagdad** at United Artists. His career blossomed and in 1928 he won the newly-formed Academy of Motion Pictures' first award for art direction for **The Dove** and **The Tempest**. A visually-attuned man, Menzies was disturbed by the practice in

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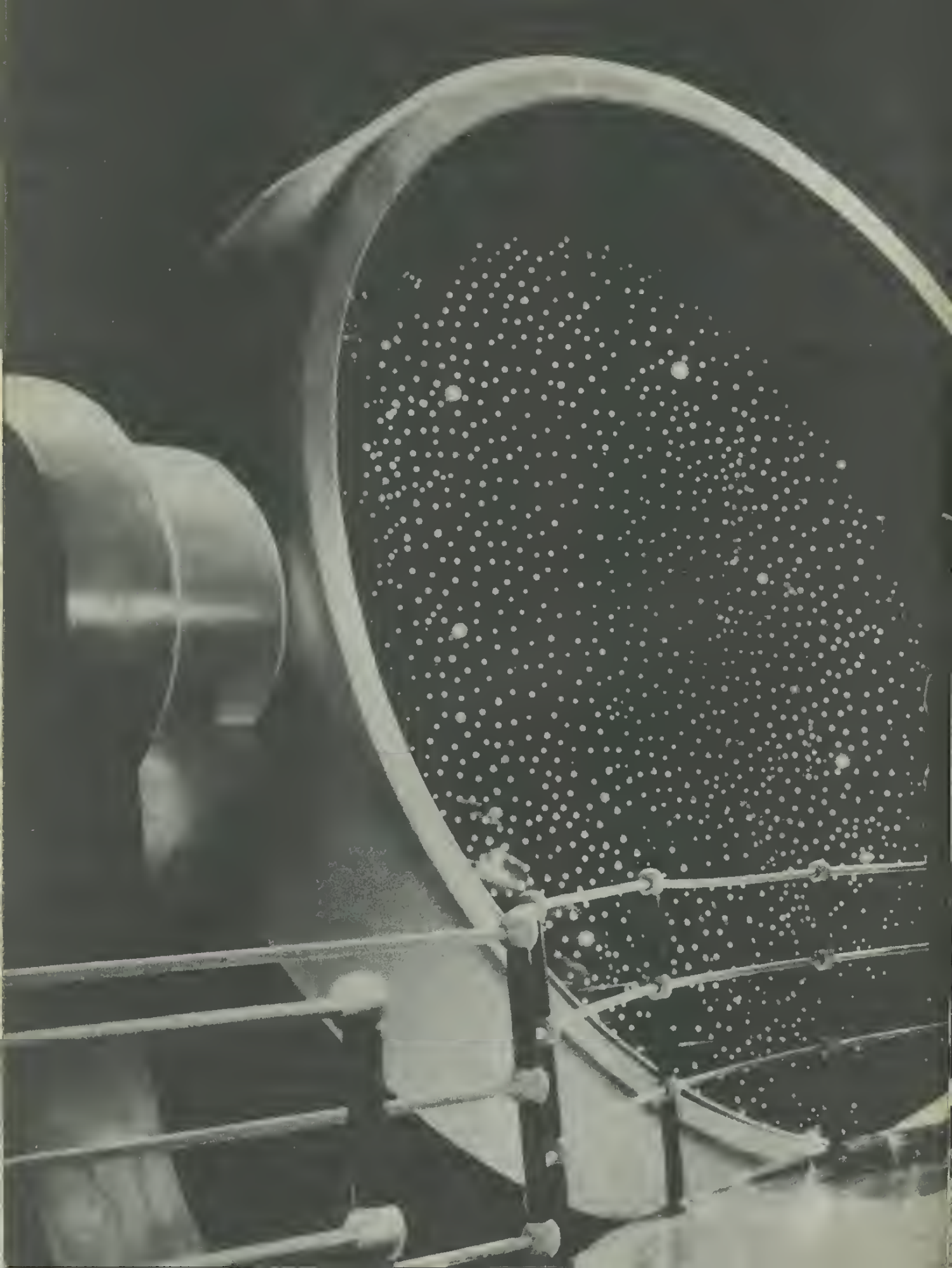

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...the movie **Things to Come**, *John ... (Raymond Massey) follows the progress of the ... craft in space as it makes ... across the ... ind," says Cabal, "it must be the ...*

early sound films of using very few sets and concentrating on the spoken word. He therefore elaborated the early production of **Bulldog Drummond** (1929), producing sixty sets and over three hundred drawings. His first film as director, the semi-supernatural **The Spider** (1931), was criticised as having too much emphasis on physical production rather than plot development. Most of the other fantastic films he would go on to direct received the same criticism. In 1932 he directed **Chandu the Magician** but it was difficult for him to find time to direct other films, so besieged was he with design assignments, such as Joseph Mankiewicz' **Alice in Wonderland** (1933). He later worked as Associate Producer on **Thief of Bagdad** (1940) and directed and designed **Invaders from Mars** and **The Maze** (both 1953).

In 1934 he was assigned to direct **Things to Come** for which H. G. Wells was to adapt his own novel. Wells was a perceptive man—a romanticist with a vital interest in science, but a humanitarian and moralist first of all. All these aspects of his character can be seen in **Things to Come**, and indeed, any of his other stories. Wells was nearing seventy when he scripted the film and the pressures of continual writing and rewriting his first realised screen adaptation proved tiring and confusing for the old man. His first script proved unfilmable and had to be rewritten twice (under the titles *Whither Mankind* and *One Hundred Years to Come*) before it was accepted. The final script was written with the aid of a Hungarian writer, Lajos Biro, who had worked in Hollywood in the twenties and would later script the Korda production of **Thief of Bagdad.**

Despite his problems with the script, Wells found no difficulty in making suggestions for the final production and Menzies, a quiet and diplomatic man, was forced to contend with continual interruptions and insistences from Wells that the film was not what he had envisaged. He frequently sent notes to Menzies giving his views on how the picture should be designed and directed. A typical note from Wells to Menzies ran:

"*All these Cecil B. de Mille effects of crowds milling about and so on that you are spending so much thought and time and money upon do not matter a rip in comparison with the effective handling of this mental drama. They are very effective in their way but they are not this film. I pray you take heed of these points, Menzies. . . . The great danger of the film is to make Massey a preachy prig. He must not intone and shout. Yours in affectionate admiration (but the author of the film, mind you), H. G. Wells.*"

Wells also sent him drawings and notes on how he could "improve" the design of the film, commenting in this instance on production drawings Menzies had submitted of the great building machines:

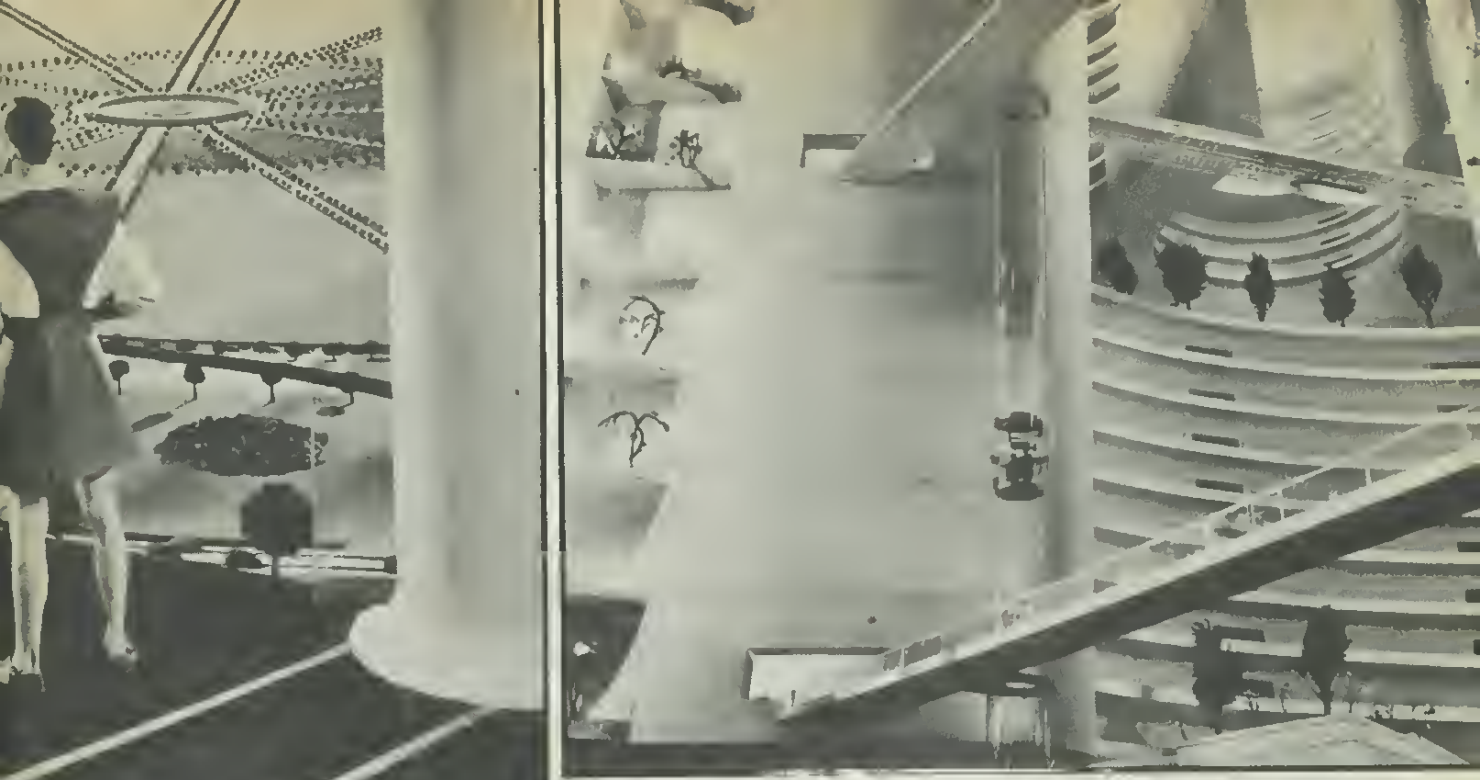
"*This is all wrong. Get it in better perspective. This is an* H. G. Wells *film and your highest best is needed for the complete realisation of my treatment. Bless you.*"

Wells also felt compelled to comment in great detail on the costumes, suggesting broad shoulders for the men, long skirts for the women and cloaks for everyone, all in fine but "dignified" materials, and unobtrusive accessories (radio telephones, gauntlets, identification discs, torches, etc). A man of contradictions, however, he then urged the designers to "let themselves go".

Menzies carried on regardless, aware that the film's faults lay in cardboard characterisations, and of the necessity to compensate with design and special effects. Vincent Korda (Alexander's brother) was given the job of Art Director and John Armstrong, Rene Hubert and the Marchioness of Queensberry were responsible for costumes. However the overall design belongs to Menzies, with breathtaking shots of the ruined Everytown, unending columns of aeroplanes, underground skyscrapers and huge sterile machines.

Filming took place at the Old London Studios and the Everytown of 1940 was represented by a London composite, complete with St Paul's dome and Oxford Circus. Leading effects technician, Ned Mann, brought together a team of two hundred people to work on special effects alone. A one-time professional roller-skater, Mann entered films in 1920. He worked on other fantasy movies in association with Alexander Korda, such as **The Man Who Could Work Miracles** (1935), **The Ghost Goes West** (1936), **Thief of Bagdad** (1940) and Mike Todd's **Around the World in Eighty Days** (1956). A master at his craft, he trained most of the top special effects men working in England today.

Dozens of beautifully conceived minia-



Far left: *Special effects supervisor Ned Mann of the set of* **Things to Come**. Centre: *A good example of Wells' concept for simple but tasteful costumes, a blend of Grecian and Art Deco. The background is another Ned Mann miniature* Above: *Everytown 2036. The foreground is a hanging miniature aligned in perspective with actors in the background to complete the image*

ture sets were used to recreate the building of the New World. These were combined with live action sequences on tiny back-projection screens inserted into the models, a process similar to that used by Douglas Trumbull and Stanley Kubrick for the landing of the lunar pod in the Moon Base in **2001, A Space Odyssey.**

Ross Jacklin, another of the team's major effects contributors, created hanging miniatures, to be suspended in perspective to match the full-sized sets. This is similar to the process of glass shots, much used in the silent era, which consisted of hanging a painted sheet of glass between the camera and the scene, matching the two together in perfect alignment in the finished shot.

In other scenes, miniature figures, attached to separate moving walkways gave an illusion of great crowds surging towards the Space Gun.

The camera work was shared by Georges Perinal, a French cinematographer who began his career in 1913 and later worked on the Korda **Thief of Bagdad,** and Eddie Cohen, an effects photographer.

As well as being a major achievement in special effects, **Things to Come** was an important event in the history of film music. Written by Arthur Bliss (a classical composer who became President of the London Symphony Orchestra Music Club in 1954), and recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Muir Mathieson, it was the first symphonic score written specifically for a movie. Closely interwoven with the visuals the score reflects and complements the various moods of the film perfectly. It was hailed as bringing film music to the attention of all "serious" music lovers. The suite is currently available on Decca Phase 4 Concert Series (PFS4363) featuring the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bernard Herrmann.

In 1935 Wells wrote a novelisation of the film based on his own screenplay, published by the Cresset Press. The book also contains some information on the making of the film. It has become a collector's item among both Wells fans and film and art collectors. Its beautiful jacket was designed by E. McKnight Kauffer, artist and posterist of the period.

Eighteen months after production began, **Things to Come** premiered at the Leicester Square Theatre on Friday, 21st February, 1936 at 8.45 pm. The British critics were enthralled, and superlatives reigned.

"Never has a film been produced with greater technical efficiency. . . . The personal scenes are finely and sincerely depicted free from the sentimentality and affectation which is the curse of the screen . . . not merely entertainment but a religious ceremony, it purges the mind with terror and wonder." *The Enquirer.*

"For sheer immensity and daring **Things to Come** dwarfs all the pictures of the week." *Daily Telegraph.*

"After today, no one will be able to point a slightly supercilious finger at the screen and say that a film has never been produced that would make people think." *The Star.*

"The film's most mature and forward-looking manifestation." *The Observer.*

"The message of Mr Wells's film, emphatic as it is, may well pass unnoticed at the time, before so imposing, one might almost say, so beautiful, a spectacle." *The Times.*

The American press were not so kind, however, and *Variety* expressed the opinion: "Dialogue intolerably bad . . . characters make long, meaningless speeches. At the final fade out, one of the characters, who has already said far too much, is still speech-making about humanity and the future of invention."

But whichever way we decide to look at **Things to Come** it is a milestone in the history of British cinema.

Things to Come (1934)

Raymond Massey (as John Cabal), *Ralph Richardson* (The Boss), *Maurice Braddell* (Doctor Harding), *Edward Chapman* (Pippa Passworthy), *Sophie Stewart* (Mrs Cabal), *Derrick de Marney* (Richard Gordon), *Margarette Scott* (Roxanna Black), *Alan Jeayes* (Grandfather Cabal), *Pickles Livingstone* (Horrie Passworthy), *Anthony Holles* (Simon Burton), *Pearl Argyll* (Catherine Cabal), *Patricia Hilliard* (Janet Gordon), *Cedric Hardwicke* (Theotocopulos).

Directed by **William Cameron Menzies,** *Sets designed by* **Vincent Korda,** *Photographed by* **Georges Perinal,** *Special effects directed by* **Ned Mann,** *Music composed by* **Arthur Bliss,** *Musical director* **Muir Mathieson,** *Edited by* **Charles Chrichton** *and* **Francis Lyon,** *Special effects directed by* **Edward Cohen,** *Costumes designed by* **John Armstrong, Rene Hubert** *and* **The Marchioness of Queensbury,** *Production manager* **David Cunyngham,** *Assistant director* **Geoffrey Boothby,** *Produced by* **Alexander Korda.** *Time 92 mins*

the Lord of the Rings

Review by Alan Murdoch

The problem with adapting an established classic to the screen is, as we all know, trying to match the portrayal of each character to images in the minds of the audience. With **Lord of the Rings**, it is difficult to judge whether director Ralph Bakshi has succeeded admirably under the circumstances or failed to realise the potential of such an epic tale.

Certainly, in some areas Bakshi *has* done a good job. The voices for all the characters are very well cast with such notable actors as Anthony Daniels (from **Star Wars**) as Legolas the elf, John Hurt (from **Alien**) as Aragorn and Andre Morell (from numerous Hammer movies) as Elrond. Where the film fails is in its budget. **Lord of the Rings** could have been the best movie of 1979 had the producers opened their wallets and lavished a little more cash on the movie. They didn't. And as a result the animation is weak in some key scenes and certain sequences from the book did not make it into the film.

Lord of the Rings opens with a voice-over narrative explaining what had gone before in *The Hobbit*. Of how the One Ring to Rule Them All was forged; of how the creature called Gollum came to possess the Ring; of how Bilbo Baggins, the Hobbit, came to "win" the Ring from Gollum; and of how Gandalf the Grey came to learn of the Power of the Ring. It is after Bilbo's "eleventy-first" birthday party that Gandalf finally persuades the hobbit to surrender the Ring to his nephew Frodo and depart the Shire. Seventeen years pass. Then, one day, Gandalf returns to tell Frodo that the original owner of the One Ring, The Dark Lord Sauron, knows the whereabouts of his property and is moving to effect its recovery. Frodo must leave the Shire seek the aid of the elves of Rivendell.

Frodo and his faithful companion, Sam, take to the road accompanied by Frodo's cousins, Merry and Pippin. Presently they hear a rider approaching behind them. Though the others think it may be Gandalf, Frodo is uncertain and urges that they hide. The rider draws close but it is not Gandalf. It is one of Sauron's Black Riders—a Ring Wraith. The rider searches the area, literally trying to sniff out the ring before it gives up and departs.

Soon the hobbits arrive at the Prancing Pony Inn at Bree. There they meet a stranger who calls himself Aragorn. The newcomer offers to guide the hobbits to Rivendell telling them that he was sent by Gandalf. After much doubt Frodo agrees and the party retires for the night.

Elsewhere, dark creatures are abroad in Bree. Three Ring Wraiths enter the village and head towards the Prancing Pony Inn.

Opposite: *The guests enjoy themselves at Bilbo Baggins' eleventy-first birthday party, from the opening scenes of* **Lord of the Rings** (1979). Centre: *The guests are shocked and puzzled when Bilbo, using his magic Ring, disappears before their very eyes.* Below: *Frodo, the new Ring-Bearer, warns the treacherous Gollum what will happen if he doesn't behave himself.*

They are joined by two others. The creatures materialise in the hobbits' bedroom and stand, swords drawn, over the beds. As if by some silent signal all five swords descend as one. But the beds do not contain sleeping hobbits, merely sacks of potatoes. Realising they have heen tricked the creatures emit unearthly screams and vanish.

Meanwhile Aragorn, who had anticipated such an attack, keeps watch over four sleeping hobbits in a nearby barn.

The party travels all through the next day until they reach the hill of Weathertop where they are to meet Gandalf. Sitting down in the circle of firelight to wait they are set upon by the five Ring Wraiths. In the ensuing battle Frodo is stabbed. But the hlade that pierced Frodo was forged in Mordor and has magical properties that will kill Frodo if he doesn't receive aid soon. The party makes haste for Rivendell, their tracks dogged hy the Ring Wraiths.

They are soon discovered by Legolas an elf, who is a member of a search party sent out from Rivendell. Frodo is placed upon the elf's horse and they all make haste for the elves' stronghold. But the Ring Wraiths are close behind joined now by their four companions. Legolas calls to his steed to see Frodo safely into Rivendell. The horse carries the Ringhearer across the Ford into the land of the elves hut so sure of their power are they that the nine Black Riders dare to cross the Ford after Frodo. However as the servants of Sauron venture into the water there is a loud roar and the river rises up in majestic fury to sweep the Ring Wraiths far downstream. Knowing he is safe at last Frodo passes out.

Frodo is unconscious for three days. When he finally awakens he learns that Elrond, king of the elves of Rivendell, has healed the wound inflicted by the Black Riders. But Frodo is dismayed to hear from Gandalf that the wizard Suruman (mis-pronounced "Aruman" several times throughout the film), who is leader of Gandalf's order, covets the Ring for himself.

Presently, at the Council of Elrond it is decided that the One Ring must be unmade in the fires of Mordor whence it came. Frodo reluctantly volunteers to carry the Ring once more and several are chosen to accompany him: Sam, Merry, Pippin, Aragorn, Boromir, Legolas, Gimli and Gandalf. Nine members of the Fellowship of the Ring to match the Nine Ring Wraiths.

As the newly-formed Fellowship makes its way towards the Mountains of Mordor they meet their first ohstacle. They have the choice of two paths. One is through the Gap

of Rohan, not favoured because it takes the Ring too close to the domain of Saruman, and the other is through the Mines of Moria.

After some difficulty the Fellowship gains access to the Mines and the companions are making their way through the darkness when they are attacked by a band of evil goblins or "orcs". Pursued by the orcs the party manages to escape towards the westernmost exit. However the orcs are not alone. The demon Balrog fights at their side and Gandalf knows he must face the creature in single combat if the others are to escape. Ordering the others to flee Gandalf turns to face the Balrog on a narrow stone bridge over a bottomless abyss. As they fight, both the creature and Gandalf plunge into the void to certain death. Leaderless and dismayed the Fellowship emerges into the daylight. They decide that they must continue on their way, though without Gandalf they are dispirited.

Presently the travellers reach Lothlorien where they meet the Lady Galadriel, and elven queen. She makes them gifts of supplies and boats and sends them on their way by river. But the companions are attacked by a roving band of orcs in the pay of Saruman and Boromir is killed. The orcs kidnap Merry and Pippin believing them to be Frodo and Sam. Meanwhile Frodo and Sam escape the fray in a boat and are making their way downstream, unaware they are now being followed by the loathsome Gollum, the creature from whom Bilbo "won" the ring in the first place.

Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli are frantic that all four hobbits are missing. Uncertain what to do they decide that they should follow Merry and Pippin as they are in the most immediate danger. As they travel they are overjoyed to meet up with Gandalf whom they had presumed dead at the hands of the Balrog. Refusing to explain how he survived Gandalf insists that they head towards Roban to warn Theoden the King of Saruman's plans to attack the palace. Once there they convince Theoden that the Fortress of Helm's Deep would be easier to defend than the palace. The small army of Rohan journeys to Helm's Deep with Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli while Gandalf departs to seek the aid of the Riders of Rohan. In the battle that ensues the orcs are defeated by the timely arrival of Gandalf and the Riders of Rohan.

As the film ends, Frodo and Sam have secured Gollum's allegiance and are headed into the Land of Mordor to Destroy the One Ring. The conclusion of this epic tale is promised in **Lord of the Rings II** due for release in early 1980.

The story is so long and so complicated (as can be seen from this short synopsis) that Bakshi had a great deal of trouble fitting the tale onto the screen. As it is, **Lord of the Rings** covers only 1½ books of the original three-volume epic. And in the transition sizeable chunks of Tolkien's story were excised in order to bring the film down to a managable 2¼ hours.

The effects are noticeable, if not painfully obvious. Gone from the screen version is the endearing, if eccentric, character of Tom Bombadil. Gone, too, is Tolkien's attention to detail which somehow added to the overall credibility of the original story. In Bakshi's version what is not omitted entirely is glossed over too quickly. The importance of the Council of Elrond, the significance and background of the Riders of Rohan, the time spent in Lothlorien by the Fellowship of the Ring. All these are left unstressed in an effort to cram as much as possible into the allotted 135 minutes.

As a result of this cramming the film has the unedited look of a rough-cut. The scenes are disjointed with the transitions between them sudden and jerky.

A more fundamental criticism would be of the animation. Bakshi's much-vaunted "breakthrough" of first filming his characters in live-action then converting to animation has both its successes and its failures. The process does succeed in achieving very life-like animation where the main characters are concerned. Where the animators fall down is with the character of Legolas the elf. In trying to make him appear elfin in his movements and body posture they have succeeded in creating a very effeminate elf.

Even where the rotoscope process has been used *in place* of animation the effect can be quite dramatic. For example, when the Ring Wraiths attack Aragorn and the hobbits at Weathertop they are rendered in a strange kind of live-action which consists mainly of dressing up silhouettes of cloaked actors. At the same time Frodo and the others are portrayed in *bona-fida* animation and the contrast is effective in stressing the other-worldliness of the dark servants of Sauron.

However, when Bakshi tries the same trick in the grand finale of the movie, the Battle of Helm's Deep, where the fortress is defended by Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli and the small army of Theoden, the effect is very disappointing. Perhaps because there is no genuine animation to contrast with the live-action footage the handling of the sequence appears to be an easy method to remain within budget. It is unfortunate that it is cheap tricks like this that prevent the film being the classic it deserves to be, and make the sequel seem further away than Bakshi would have us believe.

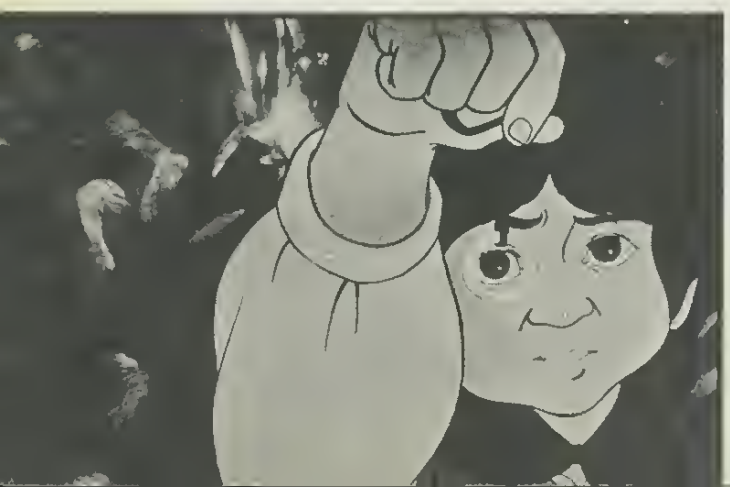
Certainly the movie deserves at least one viewing. If it achieves nother more than causing those unfamiliar with the worlds of Tolkien to actually read the original books then it has not been a pointless exercise. And those already converted can spend many happy hours debating how the film should have been made and where the existing version went wrong.

Lord of the Rings (1979)

Starring the voices of: Christopher Guard *(as Frodo Baggins)*, William Squire *(Gandalf)*, Michael Scholes *(Samwise Gamgee)*, John Hurt *(Aragorn)*, Simon Chandler *(Meriadoc Brandybuck)*, Dominic Guard *(Peregrin Took)*, Norman Bird *(Bilbo Baggins)*, Michael Graham-Cox *(Boromir)*; Anthony Daniels *(Legolas)*, David Buck *(Gimli)*, Peter Woodthorpe *(Gollum)*, Fraser Kerr *(Saruman)*, Philip Stone *(Theoden)*, Michael Deacon *(Wormtongue)*, Andre Morell *(Elrond)*, Alan Tilvem *(Innkeeper)*, Annette Crosbie *(Galadriel)*, John Westbrook *(Treebeard)*.

Directed by **Ralph Bakshi**, Screenplay by **Chris Conkling** and **Peter S. Beagle** based on the novels of J. R. R. Tolkien, Director of Photography **Timothy Galfas**, Edited by **Donald W. Ernst**, Music Composed and Conducted by **Leonard Rosenman**, Produced by **Saul Zaentz**. Colour by Deluxe. Released by United Artists.

Time: 135 mins Cert: A



Far left: *Frodo holds up the One Ring.* Centre: *Boromir falls before the barrage of orc arrows as he tries to defend the two hobbits, Pip and Merry.* Left: *Sauron's evil minions, the Ring-Wraiths, prowl through the deserted night streets of Bree.* Above: *Gandalf tells Frodo that he must flee Hobbiton, with the One Ring, if he is to escape the wrath of Sauron.*

The Starburst Interview

DEREK MEDDINGS

Superman and Bond effects technician speaks

Special effects studios are deceptively quiet places, or at least they are whenever I'm in one. I was standing in one of the smaller stages at Pinewood Studios where some of the special effects for **Moonraker** were being filmed and nothing much seemed to be happening at all. The only sign of activity was in one corner of the studio where a large, drum-like object was slowly revolving. It was bluish in colour and shaped like a giant splindle—about four or five feet thick at the centre and tapering off to about the width of a foot at each end. It was brightly lit and mounted on a platform in front of it was a camera which was pointing through a vertical sheet of glass. Behind the drum was another sheet of glass painted to represent the star-studded blackness of space. By walking in front of this set-up and viewing it from a certain angle I could suddenly see that through the first sheet of glass the upper surface of the drum looked incredibly like the curved horizon of Earth as seen from space . . .

At this point the person I'd come to interview managed to drag himself away from his work and came to greet me. It was Derek Meddings, a man who has recently made two appearances on your tv screens when, in the company of Denys Coop, Roy Field and Colin Chilvers, he went to collect a special award for the effects in **Superman** at both the British and American Academy Awards ceremonies. I'd met him before and found him to be very likeable—cheerful, self-effacing and completely unpretentious—but on this occasion he seemed slightly less cheerful and rather more preoccupied.

I found out the reason for this when we went up to his office to conduct the interview. It was a large room dominated by a vast story-board . . . a collection of sketches that covered every available piece of wall space. Many of the drawings showed space ships taking off, hurtling through space, attacking a huge space station, exploding, etc. Other sketches were of cable cars blowing up, cars crashing, boats disintegrating, men falling out of 'planes and other typically Bondian scenes of mayhem The problem was that at the time (*the interview took place near the end of last year*) Meddings and his team had yet to *produce* on film much of what was on those drawings and as the deadline drew ever nearer the thought of all the work ahead was somewhat depressing him.

I asked Meddings about his early days in the film industry and how he came to be a special effects man: "Both my mother and father were involved with the film industry in the early days at Denham Studios. They were always talking about it and I used to be taken around the studio

Opposite: *The explosive finale to the latest Bond epic* **Moonraker**, *on which Derek Meddings served as Special Effects Supervisor. Below: The huge model pterodactyl constructed by Meddings and his team for the Amicus film,* **The Land That Time Forgot** (1975).

so I grew up with the industry in my blood. And having always been interested in drawing, I saw that there was an outlet in films for the talent I had . . . if I could get into the industry. I succeeded in getting a job in the art department at Denham Studios but at that time I had no idea what an art department *was*. I thought there would be a lot more drawing involved, but after the Production Designer has designed everything it becomes more of a draughtsman's job.

While I was in the art department I got to meet certain people involved in other areas of production and when someone asked me one day if I wanted to make some models for them. I found it quite easy to progress from drawing to making models . . . you need a certain amount of artistic talent for both things and if you can draw it helps in all types of special effects.

"So I got involved with modelling, matte painting, film titles . . . I even had a go at painting backgrounds but didn't like that because you're working on too large a scale. When you're confronted with a huge canvas about fifty feet long by thirty feet high and asked to paint *realistic* scenery on it . . .well, it isn't easy.I stuck it out as long as possible and then I met Les Bowie who was doing matte paintings and general effects. I joined him at the right time because he was moving onto a new studio and I went with him. We went to a company called Anglo-Scottish Pictures at Shepperton and we had a workshop/studio there. That was over twenty years ago. I started off doing matte paintings because art was my first love, but at this particular time the British film industry were not using matte paintings as they should. Film companies were reluctant to use them and it was hard to convince people that they could be done realistically. Today it's different, of course.

"I worked on a lot of the early Hammer films with Les, doing the models and the matte paintings. I remember I worked on a **Quatermass** film with him. Les and Hammer worked a lot together because they didn't have much money to spend and he has a way of doing things very cheaply. He has the sort of mind where he can come up with a way of doing anything cheaply but very well, and without always having the best equipment to work with. But that's because he's an artist. He's very good at his job."

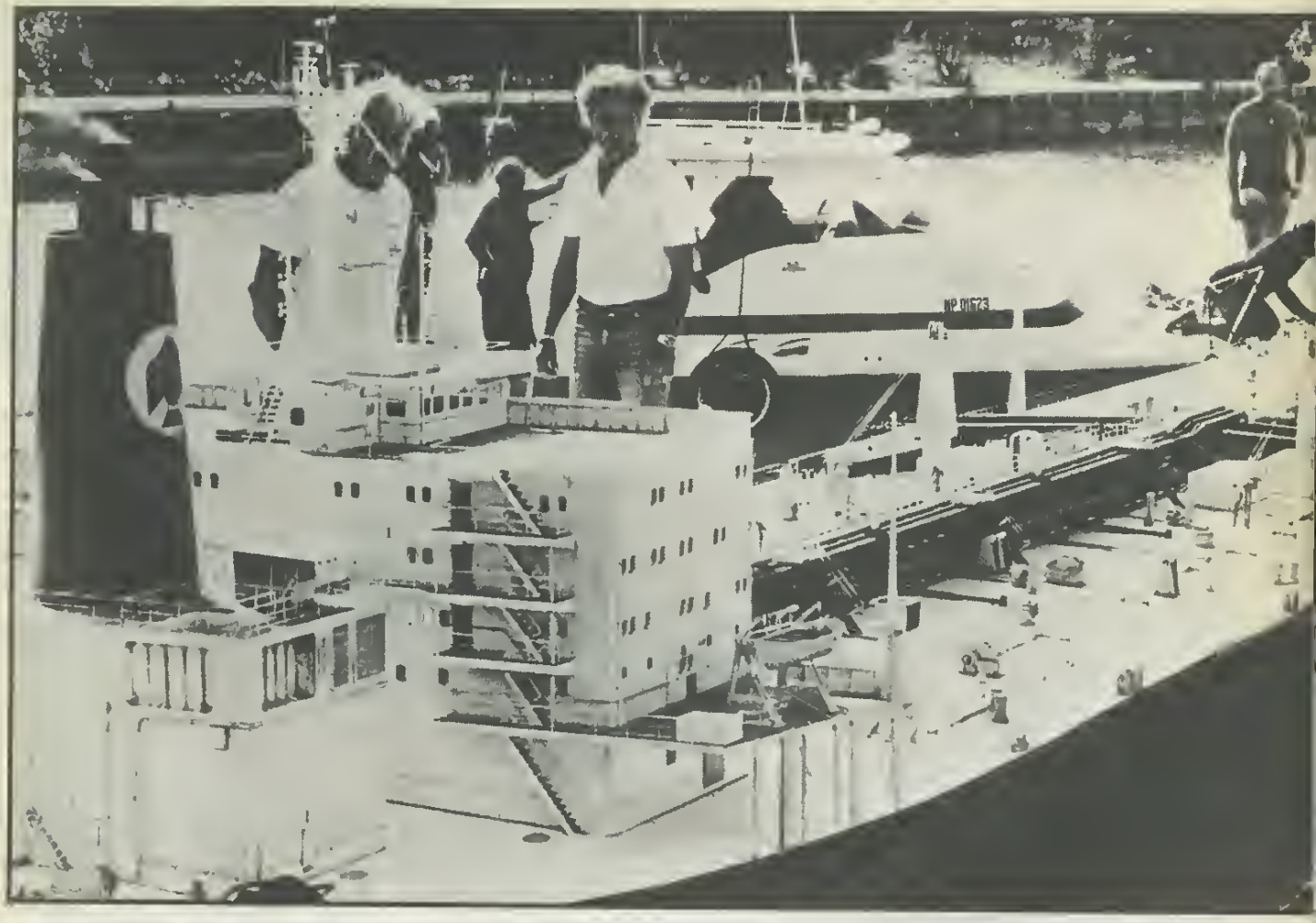
(*Sadly, since this interview took place Les Bowie, the man responsible for so many of the effects in British science fiction and fantasy films over the years, and who trained many of the top effects men working in the industry today, has died.*)

"While I was working for Les I was approached by Gerry Anderson who had a company called Century 21 which eventually made such things as **Thunderbirds** and various other puppet series for television At this time they were doing a series called Twizzle and I was asked if I would go and help them out on weekends. Les agreed so I started working weekends and evenings for Anderson. It meant designing all the special effects vehicles that were used. Eventually I was working for them full time. I had my own department and a free hand to do exactly what I wanted. The main advantage for me was that I could really specialise in doing model shots and that seems to be the thing I've become involved in more and more over the years. It gave me the opportunity to try all the sorts of things I wouldn't have had the time to do on a single picture.

"The **Thunderbirds** scripts were very complicated and they varied in locale a lot —sometimes the setting was space, sometimes underwater and even a New York street in one episode, and we had to do it all with models. We had a very tight budget and a *very* tight schedule, but we did achieve methods of doing things very quickly, one of which was simply dressing up the same models with pieces from lots of plastic model kits. Of course, everyone in the business is doing that now but I think I started the idea.

"The way we worked was as follows—I would design the basic shape of the vehicle and then we would dress them up with lots of little bits and pieces from the kits to give them detail and make them look convincing, and then we dirtied them down to age them. So at that particularly time hundreds of plastic kits were bought and we used to rummage through them finding all the interesting pieces. We didn't just stick them onto the model but joined the pieces together and made a complete unit that would fit onto the back of the basic model.

"I had three special effects stages and about forty people working for me—just on the special effects, we had nothing to do with the actual puppets, which were manipulated by a different unit. We had on



average about 50 to 60 effects shot per 50 minute episode, which is a lot. Each episode took about 10 days to make but sometimes when they'd finished all the puppet shots we'd still be working on the model shots for an extra two or three days because the things we were trying to do were so complex. But by the end of a series we'd only be about three weeks behind overall.

"All our models ran on wires suspended from little trolleys above the set because it took too long to animate them any other way. And we found that we could get them running smoothly with this method. We worked with 35 mm high speed cameras and we always showed the rushes on a full-sized cinema screen so it had to all look good. The big problem, of course, was getting rid of the wires. We had a way of lighting them that worked as a rule but if we ever saw any wires on the rushes then we had to do the shot again. They never tried to disguise the wires on the puppet stuff but we were always being congratulated on the fact that nobody ever saw a wire on any of the special effects shots."

After **Thunderbirds** Meddings worked on another Gerry Anderson series called **UFO**. The big difference with this show was that live actors were used instead of puppets and I asked him if this caused any difficulties: "No, it was much easier to work with live actors. Many of the difficulties in **Thunderbirds** were caused by the puppets not being able to do simple things like *walk*. When you had to show one walking you had to cut off their legs with the camera. But when we came to **UFO** the live actors, of course, didn't give us those problems.

"As far as the effects were concerned we had more money in **UFO**—the budgets were much bigger than they were for **Thunderbirds** and the other puppet series—and our work expanded into other areas. We got involved in the practical side of the series, handling 'floor effects' as they're called, explosions and putting bullet hits on the actors and so on. And we also had to design full-size vehicles as well as models. For instance I designed, in conjunction with Ford, three futuristic cars that were used throughout the series. They were actually built like real cars and made of metal, but I also designed three mini-mokes by myself which were made by a fibre-glass company.

"After **UFO** Anderson's company folded up and I started work on a science fiction picture starring Oliver Reed called **Zero Population Growth**. I got involved through the production designer, Tony Masters. Tony had been down to our studio and seen a lot of our work and had asked me to join him on it. It was to be filmed in Denmark, at a place called Asa Studios in Copenhagen. So I went to Denmark and while I was there Anderson's company started up again and made a series that was all live-action called **The Protectors**. Then later, of course, he did **Space 1999**.

"On **Zero Population** I did all the floor effects, which included creating an awful lot of smoke, mist and fog. All the exteriors were constantly covered in what was supposed to be polluted fog and all the artists had to walk around wearing masks to enable them to breathe. The big problem was caused by the walking/talking dolls that were supposed to be alternatives to real children in this future society. They were awful—I didn't make them, they were made by a company in England. They were made very quickly without too much thought given to them. I didn't see them until they arrived in Denmark where I was working . . . and it took an awful lot of effort to make them convincing. The worst things were the eyes and the mouths, but having been involved with puppets it was quite easy to change the eyes and make the mouths work convincingly. At least *I hope* they were convincing . . ."

Another sf/fantasy film that Meddings worked on was **The Land That Time Forgot** in 1975. "With that film", said

When is a supertanker not a supertanker? Opposite: *the huge, 60 foot model built by Derek Meddings for the Bond movie* **The Spy Who Loved Me.** Above: *The model cruises down a canal in the Bahamas.* Below: *The tanker model is destroyed at the end of the movie.*

Meddings, "we couldn't get involved with animating the models with stop-motion photography because it just takes so long—it means spending a year of your life just animating models. And apart from Harryhausen there's not really anyone in England set up to do model animation. If you start on a medium budget picture, as **The Land That Time Forgot** was, the company concerned just can't afford to set you up in such a specialist operation either, so for that picture we used model dinosaurs that were about three foot high on average and were manipulated either mechanically or like glove puppets with someone's hand inside them. They weren't made by either my team or myself but by Roger Dicken. We were involved in the filming of them and we also helped him operate them because obviously he couldn't work them all at once. It was complicated because we had to make them move and attack people but as they were basically puppets it was difficult to show them actually walking so we had to use a lot of tricks. We used front projection to combine them with the live action scenes."

An air of desperate cheapness hangs over **The Land That Time Forgot** but one of the better sequences involves an aquatic dinosaur consisting of a long neck and a big, toothy head. "That head and its mechanism was built at Shepperton Studios," said Meddings, "and they did a fantastic job on it, but the funny thing was that it got full of water every time we ducked it under, despite having been made of water-proofed, non-absorbent material. As you know, it had to snatch a German sailor off the deck of the submarine and plunge him underwater—well, we used an actor up to a certain point in the action and then we had to use a stuntman for when he actually went into the water. Inside the head was an aqua-lung so that the stuntman could breathe when the head was under the surface. We did the shot several times and each time it got harder to raise the thing because of all the water it had absorbed. We had a mechaninism like a hydraulic arm inside it but as the material got more and more water-logged, the model got so heavy we had to put a block and tackle on it and pull it up very gently. But we got the shot we wanted eventually,"

Less impressive was the pterodactyl used in the sequence where a caveman is snatched up and carried away. "That we weren't very pleased with," said Meddings, "though it worked all right in the film. We built a full-sized model which was suspended from a crane for the shots where the creature swoops and picks the man up. Then for the long shots showing it flying off with the man struggling in its mouth we cut to a smaller model. The man was a model in that shot too which contained a mechanism that moved his arm and legs."

The best effects in the film involve the German submarine, which was a model over twenty feet long. "There were four of us working on that," said Meddings, "We built the sub ourselves and filmed it in the largest tank at the studio. It moved on an underwater track and we were underwater ourselves a lot of the time while we were shooting it. We lived like fish for about six weeks filming that thing."

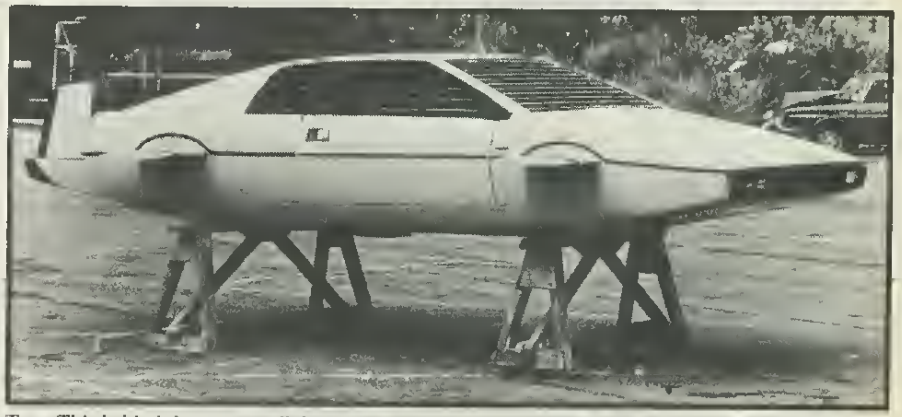
In the early 1970s Meddings became involved with the James Bond films, taking over the effects from his friend John Stears who worked on the first six Bonds. The large budgets and other resources of the Bond series have since enabled Meddings to produce some of his most spectacular work of which **Moonraker** contains the latest example. "The first Bond I worked on was **Live and Let Die**," said Meddings, "I did all the effects and model work on that. And I did all the model work on **The Man With the Golden Gun**, except for the car that turned into a 'plane. That was a radio-controlled disaster . . . it looks all right in the finished film though. There were a lot of model shots in that film that people don't realize *were* models. For instance, the long shots of the Queen Elizabeth lying on its side in Hong Kong harbour . . . that was all a model, including the police boat arriving alongside and even the whole of the Hong Kong harbour in the background.

"The island where the villain, Christopher Lee, has his headquarters containing the solar complex was also a model. It was based on a real island. The art department took photographs of it and we had to match them perfectly with our model, and as shots of the real island were used in the film as well we had to make sure everything looked exactly the same otherwise audiences would be able to tell the difference. We used all kinds of tricks to get things right. Reproducing the foliage in miniature was difficult . . . we would uproot an entire garden or a whole area just to find the right little plants. And all these things have to be put on the model in the right scale and perspective. You just can't grab hold of a handful of foliage, stick glue on them and whack them onto the model, it's got to be done with a great deal of care. And colour is always a problem, matching it exactly with the real thing. And then, of course, we had the problem of blowing the place up. It couldn't be a solid island, it was hollow, and we were virtually building the explosives into it as we were building the island. It was a big model, about twelve foot high. And we also blew up the interior of the solar complex . . . that was all a model too."

After **The Man With the Golden Gun** came **The Spy Who Loved Me** which fea-

tures some of Meddings most impressive model work. "I think pictures like Star Wars, with their good special effects, renew in producers an interest in the use of miniatures. For a long time miniatures have had this stigma attached to them—a producer or a director may have seen a very bad model shot in a film once and that's the image he keeps in his mind of *all* model shots and you can't get him to change his mind. It's like a bad matte shot—everyone remembers the bad ones they've seen because no one *notices* the good ones and so they presume that all matte shots are bad. Now when we were doing **The Spy Who Loved Me** I knew from the beginning that we were going to have to do the tanker as a miniature but I knew that Lewis Gilbert, the director, was a little worried that it wouldn't look right. But when he saw our first test shots of it he knew it would look good and that we wouldn't have to use a full-size tanker as was originally planned."

I asked, in all innocence, how they'd planned to have a real super tanker open up its bows and swallow submarines, which is what happens in the movie. "Well we always knew we would have to cheat with the front part, of course," said Meddings. "Actually our model tanker wasn't much of a miniature, it was *sixty three* feet long. The reason we built it so large was because we had to deal with submarines in the same shots and subs are basically just featureless tubes with conning towers stuck on top—they don't displace water realistically as models unless you build them to a reasonable size, and even then you have to have all kinds of gadgets attached to them below the water line to disturb the water around them as they move in order to create a realistic bow wave and wake. Water is always a problem when you're dealing with miniatures because you just can't scale water. Even though our tanker was



Top: *This behind the scenes still demonstrates the use of the rear projection process in* **The Land That Time Forgot.** Above: *One of the five Lotus cars contructed for the film* **Live and Let Die.** *This one is a full-size mock up.*

63 feet long it would only create a bow wave and wash that was in scale with a 63 foot long launch. This, of course, is nothing like what a super tanker, with its vast displacement of water, would create. So as with the subs we had to have water disturbers and so on all along the hull under the waterline.

"All that tanker footage was shot in the real sea out at the Bahamas. We built the tanker at Pinewood Studios in three sections and flew it out in a cargo 'plane, then we put it back together in Nassau. The big problem we had with the tanker was that it wasn't very seaworthy, being mostly hollow in order to swallow the submarines. Even so it weighed 12 tons. Only the aft section was built like an actual boat, the rest was like a catamaran built on two floats. We had a huge 175 hp marine engine in it which gave us a terrific wake though, of course. nothing near a real tanker's.

"Something went seriously wrong on the first day we took it out to sea. We'd launched it in a canal and it looked beautiful, then we started to drive it up the canal and out into the open sea. I was on a barge ahead of it and just as it was coming out of the canal I noticed that it was getting lower and lower in the water. There were three men inside, one of whom was Peter Biggs, my right-hand man, but they weren't aware of what was happening because they had very little vision—their only field of vision was looking straight down about 60 feet of tanker deck. We were in radio contact so I yelled over the radio: 'Peter! You're sinking!' And he replied very calmly: 'Yes, I thought we were.'

"Then he flung the engine in reverse and we managed to get the tanker back into its berth just as the front of it went underwater. We had to dive down to it, sling straps under it and pull it up with a crane. What had happened was that one of the pontoons had started to leak and two of the six pumps had packed up at the same time. But after that we never had any trouble at all."

Apart from the tanker itself I was particularly impressed with Atlantis—the villian's headquarters that resembled a giant tarantula rising out of the sea. One assumed that in the long shots it was all a model

but in the close shots, in which you could see men moving around, suggested a vast full-scale structure. I asked Meddings how this was achieved: "Well of course the long shots were of a model, but it was quite a model—almost twelve feet across, and the close shots were a combination of full-scale sections that we filmed in Sardinia, models and matte paintings. There were some very good matte shots in that picture—they were done by Peter Mayley, a very good matte artist. In my opinion the best matte artists are British though most of them work in Hollywood. Albert Whitlock, Peter Ellenshaw, Mayley . . . they're all British. Anyway he managed to have people walking about in his matte shots which added to the realism, and when we shot our model sections we also had miniature people that actually gave the impression they were walking—we moved them around mechanically. And to really confuse everybody we had a radio-controlled helicopter which flew about in the background. This is an example of where people in the audience see the helicopter flying and say to themselves, perhaps unconsciously: 'Oh, it can't be faked because I saw a helicopter fly through it.'

"We also did all the underwater stuff involving the Lotus car that turns into a submarine. We had quite a big underwater operation at Nassau—we built a special rig to fire the car down the jetty when it was being pursued by the helicopter. It was travelling at 50 miles per hour when it left the rig. When the film cuts to show the car sinking through the water we used a very convincing model with dummies representing Bond and the girl inside. The change from car into submarine involved *five* underwater model cars with each one being used to represent a different part of the transformation process, such as the wheels retracting, the fins popping up, the motors coming out of the back etc. Apart from the models there was also a full-size car that was completely drivable underwater—it was full of engines and buoyancy compensators and took a two-man crew. It was quite fantastic. We also did the sequence where the rocket is fired out of the back of the car, hurtles out of the water and destroys the helicopter hovering above. The helicopter in those scenes was actually a radio-controlled model."

After all the care that goes into the construction of Meddings' various models it seems a waste when they have to be blown up at the end of a picture but he doesn't seem to mind—in fact I suspect he rather enjoys it. "We spent days blowing up the model tanker, and then we had a controlled sinking showing it going under. It's still there—at the bottom of the sea in the Bahamas. The interior battle sequences within the tanker were filmed on the huge 007 Stage at Pinewood but we also built a model of the inside of the tanker for the final sequences when the submarine blasts its way out. The model was 30 feet long with all the details of the full-size set . . . it even had lots of little dead men lying around. We blew it up with a series of explosions and finally had the catwalk that spans the interior come crashing down just as the submarine leaves the berth. We had to do all that with a model because we couldn't bring down the cat-walk in the full-size set, it would have been too dangerous.

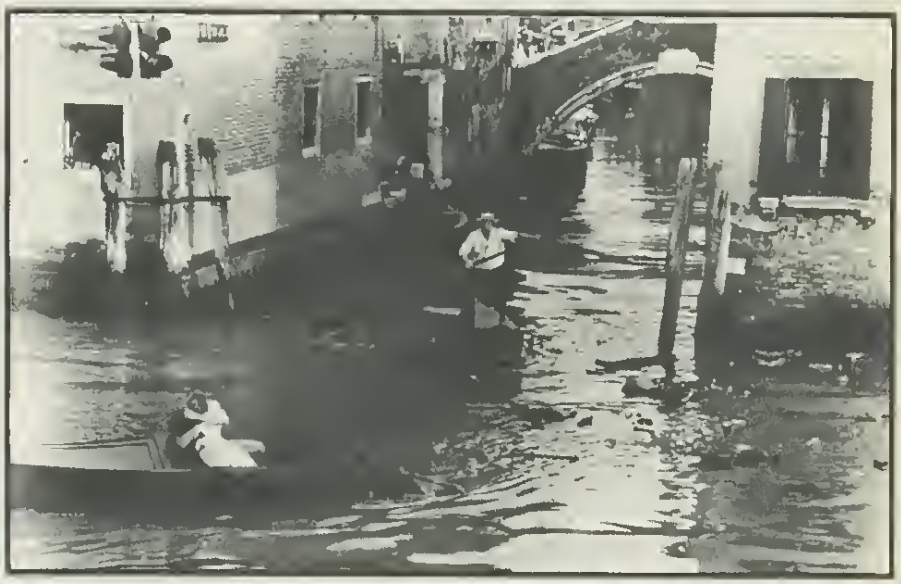
"I didn't do any of the floor effects, the explosions etc, in the full-scale tanker interior, I left that to one of my assistants, John Evans. He's very good and can be left totally alone. Having discussed it with him he then goes off and does it—he's worked with me for many years so I don't have to worry about him. He worked on the full-scale set while I worked in Nassau with the models.

"Some full-scale effects I *did* handle on **The Spy Who Loved Me** were involved in the sequence where a rocket-powered motor bike side-car full of explosives is fired at Bond's Lotus but hits a truck instead. It was all done for real on a mountain road in Sardinia. Our side-car, which we built especially, was motorised and had just enough room for a small stunt man inside it. It was packed with engine, steering mechanism and rockets. The rockets actually had enough power to move the side car—they weren't powerful enough to maintain the necessary speed but they certainly launched the car out of the cradle that we'd built on the side of the motor bike.

"The truck that blows up is supposed to be full of feather mattresses so we had to produce a cloud of feathers with the explosion, and that wasn't easy. We had tons of them and it was all a terrible drama trying to control them. I should think a major part of Sardinia is still covered with feathers.

"We used a dummy on the motorbike which was fired out over the cliff from a special ramp with an air ram—a long, telescopic arm that shot out with a terrible noise at the push of a button. The dummy had to separate from the bike as soon as possible—the director didn't want it sitting calmly on the bike for the whole drop—so we had to make a quick-release mechanism for it. Our dummy looked very convincing because he was built so he wouldn't bend in any unnatural way. Some effects men are content to make a dummy very haphazardly and don't worry what it looks like, with the result that the arms or legs bend the wrong way as they fall. But these days I think everyone in the industry is trying to make things look as real as possible. We did a dummy for a film called **Aces High** that actually fell 6,000 feet while on fire, and we had a mechanism inside him that moved his arms so that as he fell he seemed to be trying to beat the flames out . . ."

I asked what it was like working with the director Lewis Gilbert. "He's a very nice man and a very competent director—a good, all-round director and a good action director with a good imagination. He also believes that if you hire technicians you should have faith in them and listen to what they have to say. A lot of directors don't want to listen. And we also have as our production designer Ken Adam who is another man of the same calibre. He will listen to you and if you suggest something and he likes it then you're allowed to go and do it. I work very closely with him—the director, the production designer and the special effects people have to work very closely on pictures like the Bonds because it's critical that what the director has shot in full-scale matches up exactly with what we shoot in model form perhaps up to two months later. You don't want to end up shooting two different films, as has sometimes happened in the past." ■



Next issue: *Derek Meddings talks about his special effects work for the latest Bond movie, the science fiction epic* **Moonraker.**

Maya Merchandising

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THE HUMANOID

Rather than present a straightforward review of Columbia's current science fantasy offering *The Humanoid*, *Starburst* has come up with a batch of rare production drawings from the early planning stages of the film and together with a review from *Starburst* regular Tony Crawley, presents an exclusive look at how the planned version differs from the final movie.

The other evening I was sitting having a quiet drink with some contributors to **Starburst.**

One of them, a gent prone to such misfortunates as facing a pizza after seeing **The Incredible Melting Man,** eating spaghetti after **Squirm** and developing a neck swelling after **The Manitou,** had a new tale of woe.

Apparently he'd had another crack at a fantasy film script (his previous attempt is a story for another day). The plot concerned an organic UFO landing in the Lake District, with the media descending on the incident, and being turned into edible fungus. (I think the intent was a somewhat humourous end product).

He sent the script to the head of an American international picture company who had been interested in his previous work.

Much to his surprise (being an unassuming Australian sort), he was delighted to receive a positive reaction, and an invitation to discuss the storyline further with a visiting executive at Pinewood studios.

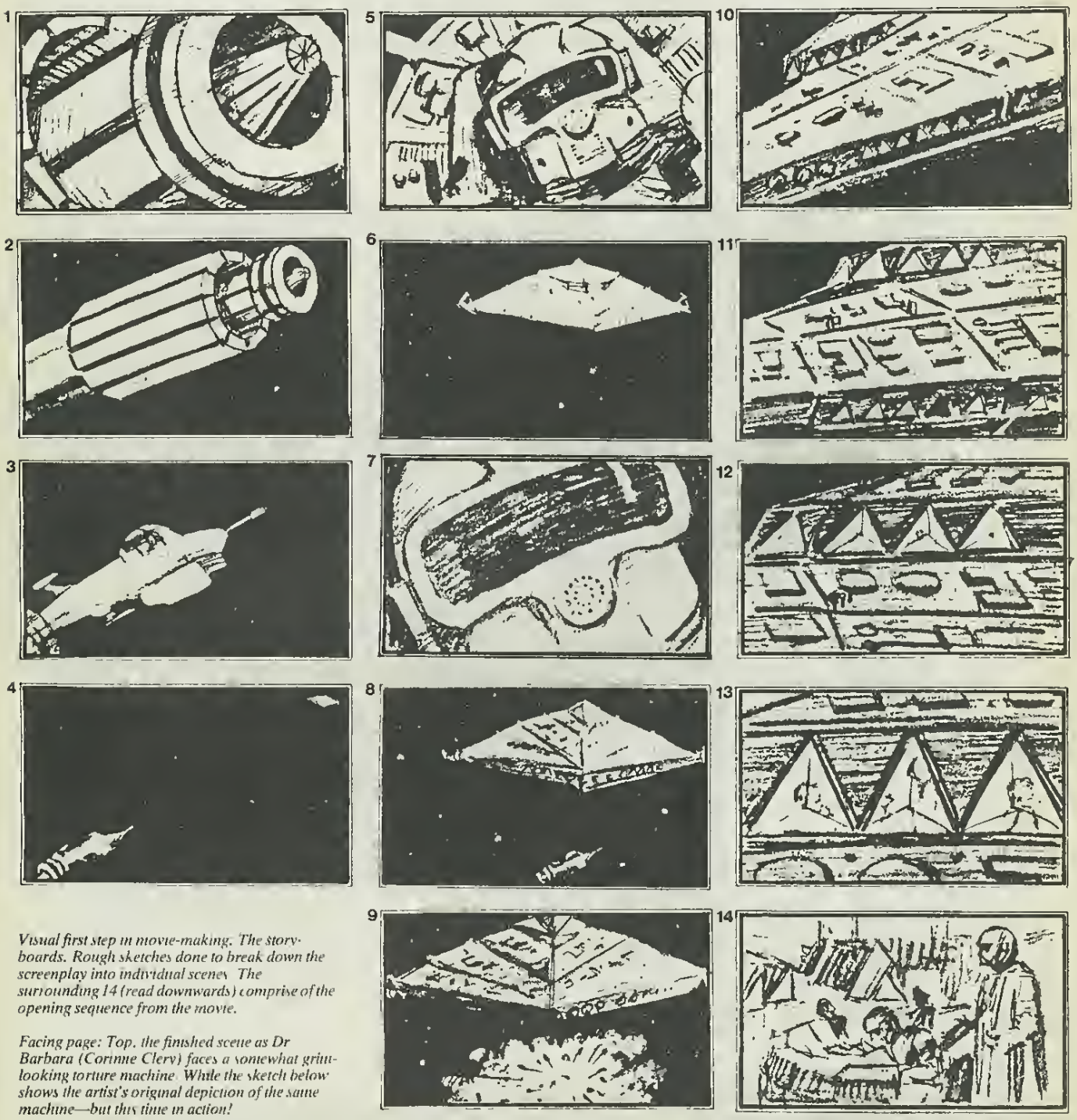
Upon arrival, he was asked if he could turn it into a rip-off of **Animal House.**

Which brings us very nicely to **The Humanoid**, the new Italian science fiction movie.

Following the success of the syndicated **Thief of Baghdad** strip produced for Columbia Pictures (see **Starburst** 7), moves were made towards a similar project for **The Humanoid.** Countless storyboards, sketches, stills and synopses were handed to **Starburst** for our perusal, along with a screening of the finished film.

And so with the fantastic material released to us, it seemed an ideal chance to look at an area of movie making other than the favourite of special effects.

It would appear that **Cosmos King** (the Italian title for the movie) has an origin



Visual first step in movie-making. The storyboards. Rough sketches done to break down the screenplay into individual scenes. The surrounding 14 (read downwards) comprise of the opening sequence from the movie.

Facing page: Top, the finished scene as Dr Barbara (Corinne Clery) faces a somewhat grim-looking torture machine. While the sketch below shows the artist's original depiction of the same machine—but this time in action!

similar to our unfortunate **Starburst** contributor's story. For, among the papers, sketches and prints we received was what must have been the original synopsis.

It tells us that a sailor is shipwrecked and cast ashore on a supposedly deserted island. But he soon discovers it inhabited by a scientist bent on revenge against his old associates. The scientist intends to change the sailor into a being different to normal men, with increased strength and an animal rage, and set the being on his enemies.

A familiar plot? Could it be that Merope Films of Rome intended to cash in on the expected success of the **Island of Dr Moreau** re-make, in the same way another Italian company had intended with **Queen Kong**, hot on the tail of the **King Kong** remake?

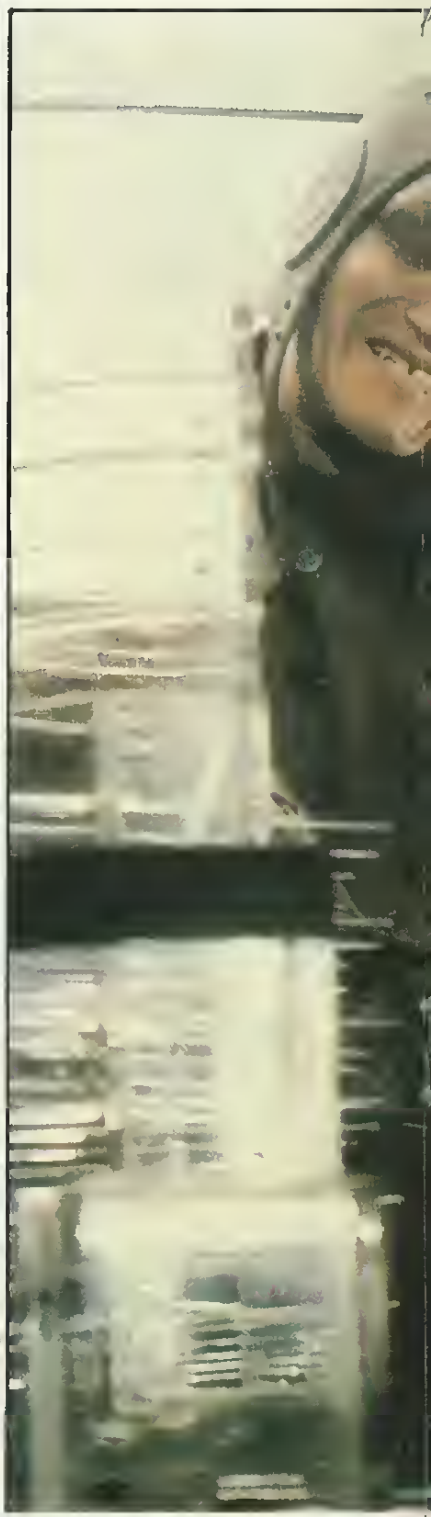
Whether that was the case or not, plans were (fortunately) interrupted by the timely release of **Star Wars**. You can almost hear the voice of Merope shout out "Setta it in space!".

So the shipwrecked sailor becomes a star ship-wrecked pilot, the sea becomes space, the island a planet, the manimal a humanoid, and there you have it . . . **The Star War of Dr Moreau**.

But, still no real criticism. After all, had not the Italian-produced Dollars/Eastwood movies made more than ten years earlier been almost direct swipes of Kirosawa's excellent samurai films starring Toshiro Mifune?

Re-makes, follow-ups and stolen or borrowed themes have worked many times over the world. Hammer's (official) Universal-inspired boom saved a whole genre of cinema, for instance.

And, with their four million dollar budget, Merope could hardly be accused of a *cheap* rip-off. But does it work? No. Richard Kiel, who stars as the science fiction Frankenstein creature, can hardly be blamed for seeing a great potential in the



film (see our interview next month), after all he can hardly speak a word of Italian, and we'll never know what ended up on the cutting room floor. But, even if you *haven't seen* **Star Wars**, you'll find little to enjoy beyond the special effects.

The biggest disappointment is that it isn't a cheap exploitation. It's an expensive one, wasting talented actors (Richard Kiel, Barbara Bach, Arthur Kennedy), Ennio (Dollars) Morricone music and a great deal of above average effects and pre-production work.

Worse yet, it was made with the American/English audience in mind, rather than a home (Italian) market movie.

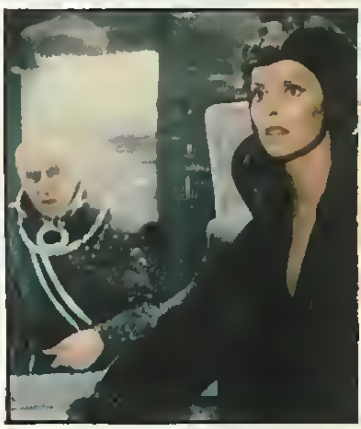
Even Sensurround would be hard pressed to save it, for despite the talent and money, the key thing it lacks is imagination.

We seem to be living in an age where a solid script and good direction takes second place to the big dollar special effects.

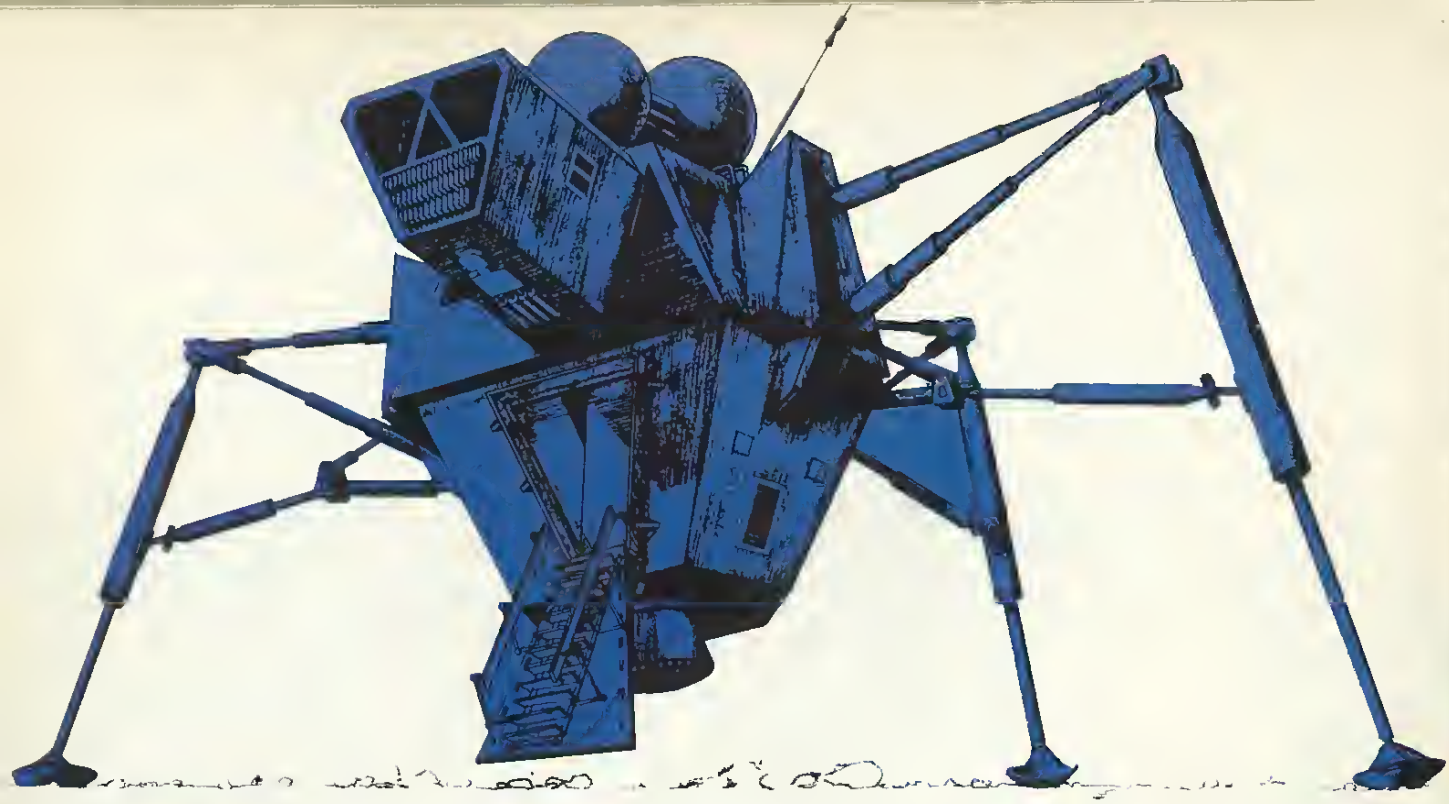
Superman the Movie was a perfect example. The most expensive star, the most expensive film, yet the most disappointing plot holes—especially noticeable in its time travel "solution" and short-sighted Kryptonian scientists.

So—but moreso—suffered **The Humanoid**. However, over the next few pages we'd like to display some of the more interesting facets of the film, so that should you see the movie you might not dismiss it as just a cheap rip-off of **Star Wars** and criticise everyone connected with the film. Instead, pity the man who took such an amount of potentially great material, but didn't have a fraction of the imagination needed to realise it.

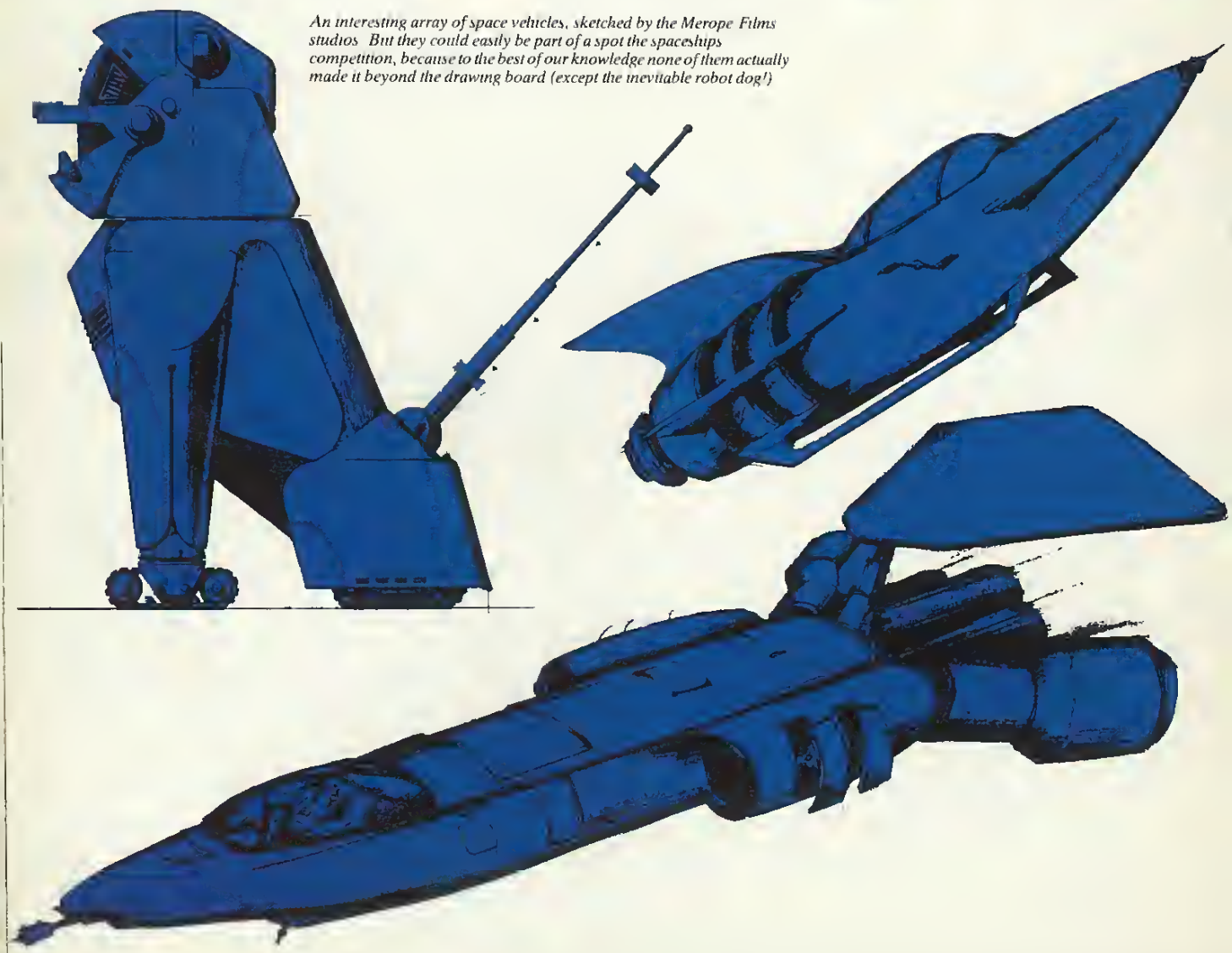
Maybe it's about time movie producers were reminded that their audiences *are* intelligent thinking human beings, who can only be sold publicity hype a few times before they dismiss the whole of cinema and settle for the free movies on television ●



Six scenes from the finished film (reviewed on page 27) featuring the laser-arrow shooting archers, Barbara Bach and Arthur Kennedy below (the bad guys), Richard Kiel and Corinne Clery centre (the good guys), an action scene and two more shots of the lovely Ms Bach.



An interesting array of space vehicles, sketched by the Merope Films studios. But they could easily be part of a spot the spaceships competition, because to the best of our knowledge none of them actually made it beyond the drawing board (except the inevitable robot dog!)



HUMANOID

Review by Tony Crawley

Sinee **Star Wars** ehanged the faee of the motion pieture industry almost two years ago, every one and his father has leaped upon the briskly-moving bandwagon to produee seienee fantasy fodder. The result is a deluge of good, bad and indifferent movies pouring into our einemas from around the world. Even with Italy's latest offering, **The Humanoid,** starring Riehard Kiel. George Lueas has little to worry about.

The mixture is the same as before. As with most seience fantasy produet made outside the upper Hollywood echeleons (with the ohvious exeeption of the shameless **Battlestar Galactica**), **The Humanoid** appears to be another **Star Wars** elone. George Lucas rejigged a bit. Not mueh.

Though not as shaggy, Riehard Kiel is very mueh the Chewhacca of this particular spaee-opera. And his friends and foes are very familiar, indeed.

For Prinee Leia read Corinne Clery's Barbara heroine, clearly more shapely than Carrie Fisher. For Han Solo read Leonard Mann's seeurity chief, Nik, basieally half-Han and half-Luke. For C3PO and R2-D2 read Mareo Yeh's Tom-Tom, a Tibetan youngster with what might be ealled De Palmian powers, and Kiel's rohodog, Kim, a metallic eanine figure that messes the floor when it's unduly alarmed. A nervous malfunction, perhaps.

The only real switeh, if switeh it be, is that the evil forees are both male and female. For Peter Cushing read Arthur Kennedy's mad seientist, Kraspin, reseued from his sentence in The House of Lethargy by Barbara Baeh's Lady Agatha of the planet Noxon. And for Darth Vadar, read Ivan Rassimov as Graal, alias The Brother of the Night, alias the leader of the fiendish Nurek rebels. And for the plot, don't read on—it's more muddling on paper than it is (almost) on sereen. But we'll give it a try.

After yet another of those futuristie nuelear set-tos, whieh all good sf insists we will suffer, Earth is now known as Metropolis: so is its eapital city. Our old planet has been the solar system's peaceful fulerum for eenturies under the rule of The Elder.

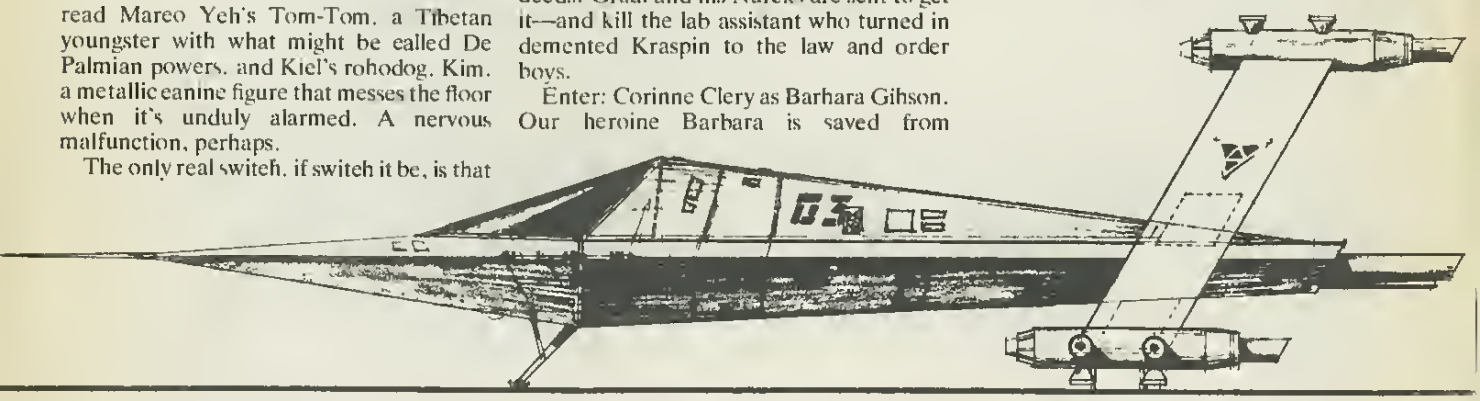
Lady Agatha has a toueh of Countess Dracula ahout her, remaining forever young, if not from the hlood of virgin lasses, then from a similar youth serum discovered by Kraspin. No wonder she reseued him . . . He, though, is far more into experimentation about the mutation of human beings. He needs earth's supply of K-element—or Kappa—to continue his foul deeds. Graal and his Nureks are sent to get it—and kill the lab assistant who turned in demented Kraspin to the law and order boys.

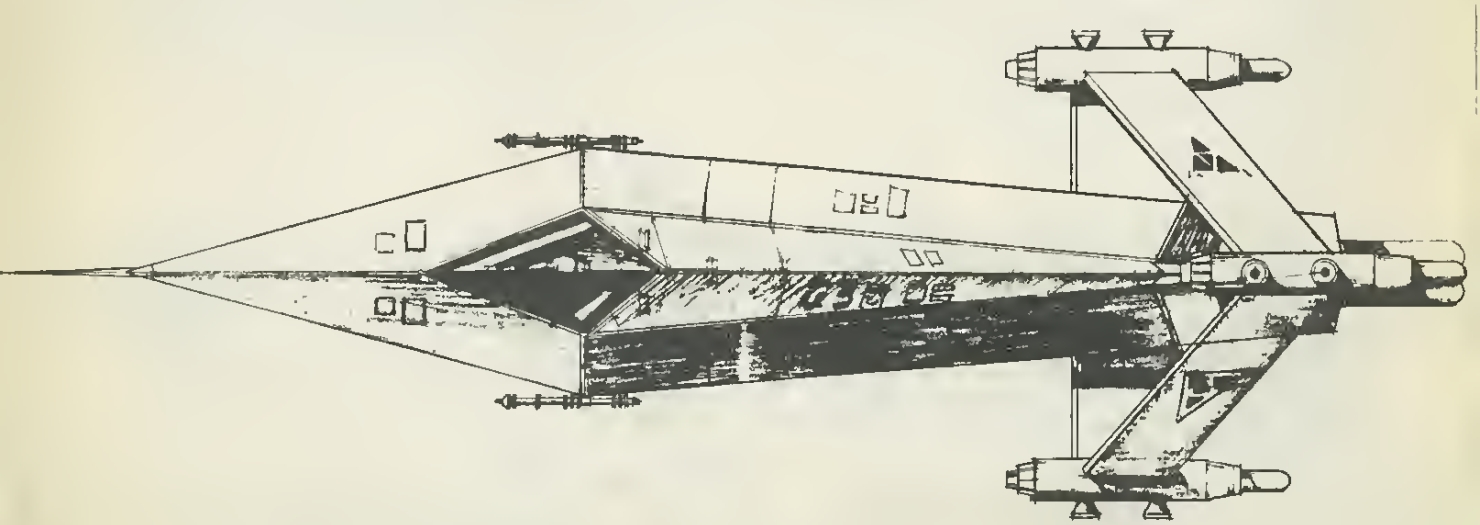
Enter: Corinne Clery as Barhara Gihson. Our heroine Barbara is saved from annihalation by her prodiguously metaphysieally-talented young friend, Tom-Tom. The devastation of the Nurek attack alerts Metropolis to the awful faet that war has returned to outer-space. The Elder makes plans aeeordingly. Nik, head of Security, is ordered to eapture Kraspin and thwart all further attaeks from The Brother of the Night. Not easy. But Nik proves to be the Mann for the job, so to speak.

But where I hear you all asking—where is Richard Kiel?

He's due any minute now in the guise of bearded, mild-mannered Stellar Colony Inspeetor Golob of Metrolpolis, accompanied by his ever-faithful canine robot, Kip. Unfortunately there is a malfunction in their spaeeship and they have to make a foreed landing on the oily surface of one of Noxon's stagnant seas.

And that's how Riehard Kiel's happy-go-lucky giant of a spaee man becomes the first vietim of Kraspin's plans for ereating humanoids endowed with superhuman strength and capable of resisting all energy weapons. The seientist lets fly with a nuelear projectile. Big bang! And onee the dust and





debris have settled, Golob is . . . a humanoid. Beardless and hefty with it.

This particular transformation is something of a non-starter, of course. It would have come off better if Richard Kiel was not 7ft 2ins high to begin with. He looks as if he could knock over planets even before he's Kraspinised.

His limitless strength and agressiveness (well, how would you feel about such treatment?) is subdued by narcotic gas and he's captured by Kraspin's men. In his Noxon lab, the noxious villain opens up one of Golob's wrists and implants a remote-control sensor. Golob's is now in his power. The humanoid's first test will be to return to Metropolis and eliminate The Elder—and anyone else rash enough to get in his way—and destroy the central government.

In places, the film is rather better than it may sound here. Basically though it's **Frankenstein Meets Countess Dracula and Star Wars.**

The credits read like an Italian menu. The script, covering so many possible genres at once, stems from Adriana Bolzoni, Garry Rusoff and Aldo Lado. George B. Lewis, who directs, is really Aldo Lado, himself. He shot the film at the Dear studios in Rome, with locations in Israel, the Canary Isles and, so we're informed, Moon Valley in South Africa. Supervising the varied effects (process work, opticals and bags of occasionally-obvious models) is Antony M. Dawson, who we all know to be really Antonio Margheriti, the Roman director of some of the better-class Gothic horror, Italian-style (including the best of Barbara Steele, who would be better suited to a movie like this than Miss Bach). And just to remind you it's all Italian, no matter how the dialogue sounds now, the music comes from Rome's own John Williams—Ennio Morricone.

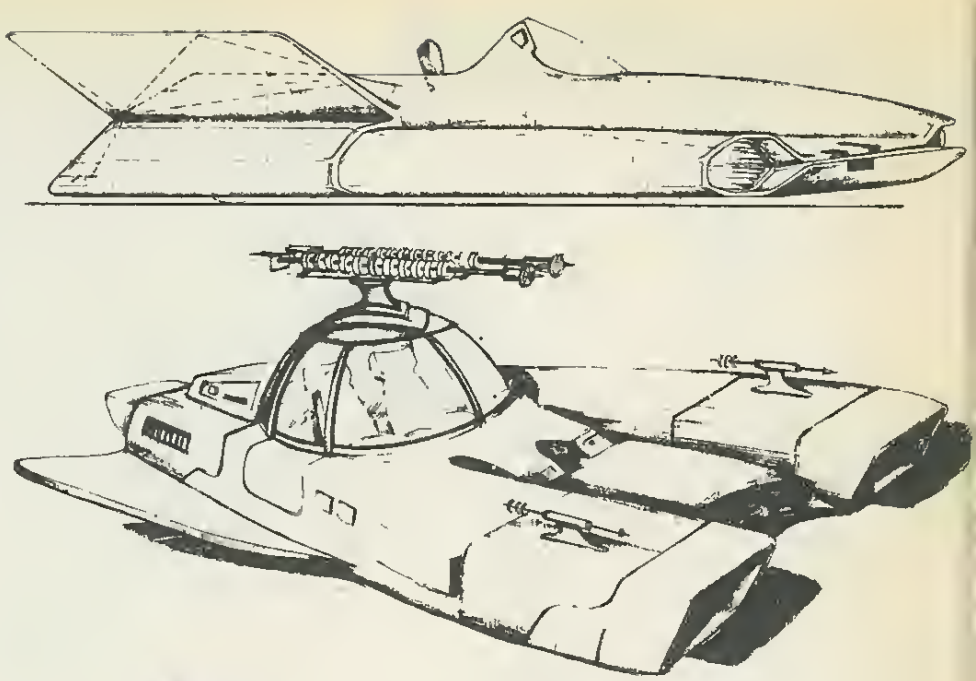
There's action aplenty with starships, starfighters, all kinds of galactic mechanicalia—as shown in our exclusive production artwork. Battles include Tom-Tom's strange, guardian-like figures using glass bows with laser arrows—something new, at least.

Naturally, everyone gets their just deserts—or rewards. Poor Corrine Clery faces a fate worse than Pearl White inside a spikey machine, in which Kraspin now makes his youth serum. Golob smashes buildings with the ease of a rampaging *King Kong*, but fortunately soon comes under the extraordinary powers of young Tom-Tom. Together they thwart the evil plans of Kraspin by destroying the rocket full of Kappa which will turn all the citizens of Metropolis into humanoids. Golob simply tears the nuclear warhead off it with a flick or two of his enormous mitts.

Lady Agatha runs out of her serum and withers away into a **Countess-cum-She** finale. Kraspin dies in the heat-blast of his own deadly rocket. Graal simply disappears when he dies—all that remains of him is his armour. And well, for Italy, it's not at all bad, if you haven't seen **Star Wars** first.

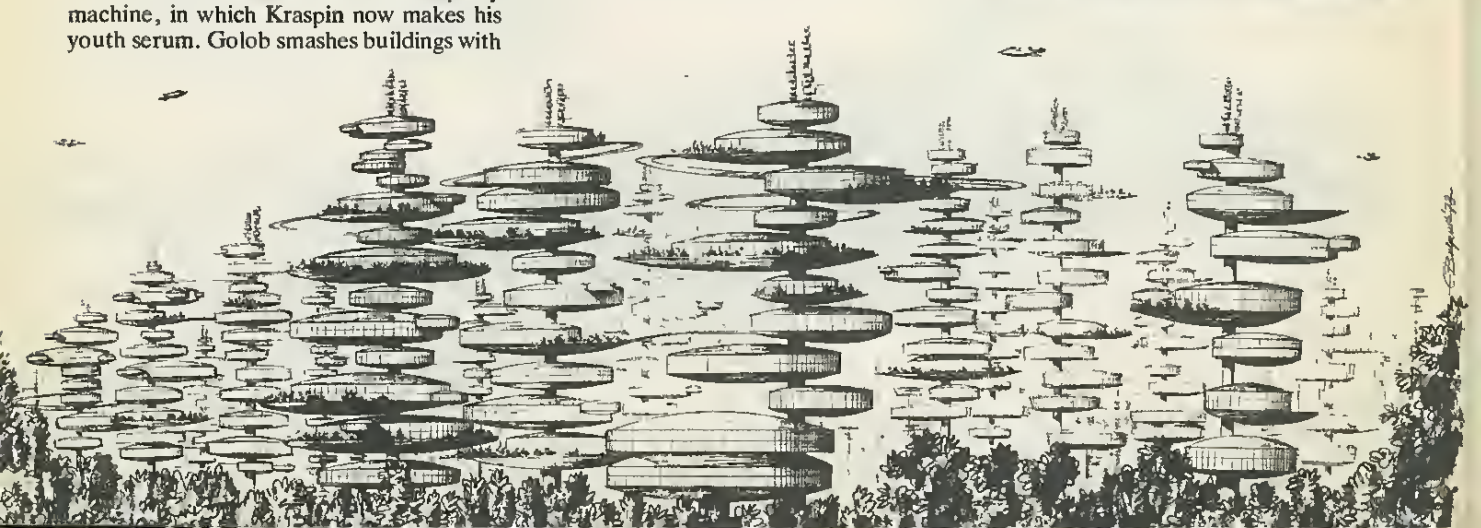
For all the mayhem, effects, rip-offs and inevitable, unintended laughter, there are quite a few memorable moments. None better than the robot dog messing the floor with his malfunctions. Beat that, R2-D2.

Footnote: As Golob is a humanoid only when clean-shaven, I'm beginning to have my doubts about Dez Skinn, whose nine-year old beard mysteriously disappeared last week. If it doesn't grow back soon, I'll start mailing in my manuscripts!



Above: Two angles of a **Humanoid** *landspeeder sketch, and below: an artist's impression of the futuristic city of Metropolis.*

The Humanoid (1978)
Richard Kiel *(as Golob)*, Barbara Bach *(Lady Agatha)*, Corinne Clery *(Barbara Gibson)*, Arthur Kennedy *(Kraspin)*, Leonard Mann *(Nik)*, Ivan Rassimov *(Graal)*, Marco Yeh *(Tom-Tom)*, Massimo Serato *(Great Brother)*, with Venantino Venantini, Vito Fornai, Guiseppe Quaglia, Attilipo Dise.
Directed by **George B. Lewis** (**Aldo Lado**), produced by **Georgio Venturini**, screenplay by **Adriana Bolzoni, Aldo Lado** and **Garry Rusoff**, photographed by **Silvana Ippoliti**, edited by **Mario Morre**, special effects supervisor **Antony M. Dawson** (**Antonio Margheriti**) special effects by **Armando Valcaudo**, process photography **Jan W. Jacobson**, opticals **Studio 4, Studio Varzini, Ermanno Diamonte**, models by **Emilio Ruiz**, costumes designed by **Luca Sabatelli**. A Merope Film (Rome) production for Titanus. UK release by Columbia-EMI-Warner.
Colour. Time: 99 mins.



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The Star Trek Interviews ~ Part 2

PERSIS KHAMBATTA

The new Star Trek star interviewed

Black-haired Persis Khambatts shaved her head for the Star Trek movie—when the revised tv series notion fell apart at the seam and the project became a movie again.

A Bombay fashion model from thirteen, Miss India at 16, and award-winning Indian movie star (*Bombay in the Arms of the Night* , etc), Persis made her international debut opposite Michael Caine in Ralph Nelson's *The Wilby Conspiracy*, followed by Britain's *Conduct Unbecoming* plus US tele-movie success in *Man with the Power*, a kind of "Five-Million Dollar Man" idea. Between films, she modelled in London, winning covers galore and the *Newsweek* apellation of "the Sophia Loren of India".

She hails from the Parsi community, descendants of the original Persians settling in India—"just 80,000 of us, we're a dying race because we married cousins". She aims to make a tv documentary on her religion, Zoroastrian, which worships fire, "the most pure thing". Their rites of birth, marriage and death are conseerated in the Fire Temple. The essence of Persis is grace, style, natural talent, professionalism, and a stunningly photogenic olive-skinned beauty of universal versatility: plain, exotic, girl-next-door, Spanish, Italian, French, gypsy, vampire. "Simply anyone."

Now she's the new Enterprise navigator, Ilia, from the planet Delta, in Robert Wise's multi-million dollar *Star Trek* film. Here she talks about how she won the role, shaved her head, enjoyed the filming (five o'clock shadow and all)—but says as little as she dare tell about the film itself.

Starburst: *How were you selected for the movie—indeed, how did you hear about the part of the new navigator?*

Persis: While I was living in London seven years ago, I watched **Star Trek** and became a big fan. I asked my agent once if I could get on the show because there were so many exoitic women in it. He explained they'd stopped making the series. Then, I was in New York and going on to L.A. and my agent said, "Hey, **Star Trek** is doing a series again—and they'd like to see you." I said, Fabulous! Then he said, "But the girl is supposed to be bald". So when I went for my interview, what I did was I went to one of those Columbia Studio chemist shops, paid a dollar for a bald cap —the cheapest I could find!

Who buys bald caps in chemists?

The place was connected with the make-up department. A bald cap is part of the make-up kit. So I walked in to see Gene Roddenberry with it on: "I want you to see me without hair." All the other girls were really dressed up with their best hair-dos and looking beautiful, while I looked . . . well, as if I had a swimming-cap on. I sat there, reading and said I'd really appreciate being tested. "I'm not such a fantastic reader," I said, "but I can prove I'm good in a test." They tested two girls—and I got the job.

What did the test comprise?

A very funny thing—this girl playing up to a new character, Zon. This was before Spock came back into it. Zon was to be the new Spock, I suppose. So they were testing Zon and Ilia [*she pronounces it: eye-lia*]. Bob Collins directed the test. First, I went to an acting teacher, showed him my lines and did it for him. Overdid it, in fact. He told me to play it absolutely straight.

I was so nervous in the test that my lip was shaking, but I tried to play it as natural as possible. I think I got the part because everybody else was coming on too strong. I was just playing myself.

Not easy.

It is to me. I'm an instinctive actress.

All this was for the new tv series idea?

Yes. Originally, I signed for a six-year television series. When it was turned into a movie I was really happy. I don't think any of the actors would have come back in a series again. It stops you from working, once you're known as a certain character.

But if the film's a hit, won't they make a new tv series?

They might make a sequel to the film, but not a series. I doubt it, but one doesn't know. The actors probably wouldn't want that, they've been on the series for so long. I don't think Spock and Capt Kirk would go back to television.

Isn't he Admiral Kirk now?

Far left: *The stars of the new* **Star Trek** *movie pose for a group shot on the bridge of the Enterprise.* Centre: *Persis Khambatta was a fashion model before becoming involved in* **Star Trek The Motion Picture.** Left: *The clean-shaven Persis as she will appear in the movie.*

Oh yes, sorry. The other new character in the crew is the new captain of the Enterprise—Stephen Collins as Willard Decker.

Why did you agree to be shaven for the role, couldn't you have worn your cap again?

They don't really work on film. You can see the wrinkles at the back of the neck. To look bald there is only one thing to do—*become* bald.

That means you need to know about the shape of your head, which few of us know much about.

What happened was about six or seven years ago, when I had very long hair—below my waist—an art director put brilliantine on it and took a profile shot with my hair absolutely tight on my scalp. He told me I had a beautifully shaped head. So, I remembered that. Also, I thought that this was six weeks' work—then it turned out to be six months! I felt that in six weeks my hair was going to grow back. And it is now, of course, look . . . (*she removes her arab-style head-dress and shows off a tufty head, about an inch all round*). I think in six months I should have good hair again.

Unless they ask you to shave again for the various international premieres . . .

I don't mind, it's done me good. Bald is beautiful! I'm much more confident without my hair. I was a very insecure person with hair. All of a sudden, I'm full of confidence in myself. Fred Phillips, Spock's make-up man, did the shaving. I didn't realise until I saw the picture of the event that he was crying as he did it—*everyone* around me was crying. I didn't want to see the mirror until it was actually completely shaven off. My first reaction was "Wow!" I really felt good about it.

"Originally I signed for a six year television series of *Star Trek*. When it was turned into a movie I was really happy."

No problems then?

Well, I bang my head more when I'm bald, it seems. When I was shaved the first time, the head was very soft—sensitive, just like your first shave. Having a shower became the greatest feeling ever. I stay longer in the shower now, so I'm probably cleaner, too. The main problem was, because of the thick make-up, I got pimples. The moment there was a pimple on my skull, everybody was hysterical on the set. No more close-ups! Ilia could not have a pimple!

So tell us, who is Ilia, what is she?

She's from the planet Delta and Deltans are *very* intelligent. Her father was on the Enterprise a long time ago and being so intelligent, we Deltans make excellent mathematicians and, therefore, the best navigators. The story takes place in the 25th Century when Gene Roddenberry hopes the world will be this Deltan way: beyond materialism and into more spiritual aspects of feeling, touching . . . reading the minds of people. Because the mind is such a powerful thing. We're all occupied with making money, work, all those things. But really concentrate your mind and, if that is what you want to do, you can read people's minds—understand them far better.

My touch—Ilia's—can help people to heal. We have tremendous mind control and concentration, which we have as an inherent part of us. I'm already there! I felt very close to that part. I have very powerful dreams for instance. And, when I saw **Close Encounters . . .** I actually felt my first spiritual experience at that movie. I wanted so much to go with that person into that mothership. I felt a part of him. I wanted to go away with him . . .

Meantime your ship, the Enterprise, is taken out of mothballs, I gather, called upon to serve mankind again because . . . there's something nasty up there.

And I'm involved with that . . . something. I become part of . . . that thing. My mind gets attracted to it. All the other people, it passes by. With me, it has something and . . . now I can't really tell you the story.

But you want to . . .?

No! Every time I say something, you won't understand unless I say something further. I would like the audience to wait and see it. It's too early to talk about it now. We're not supposed to . . .

Yes, security was tight during shooting, wasn't it—tighter than usual?

It was easier to get into the White House than our set. Very strict. The Press came in very much at the end, and a couple of guests were allowed, but one wasn't interested in inviting anybody to the set because you had to go through the whole security system so much. When they shaved my head, they had two security guards on the door. Of course as I was the one getting shaved, nobody checked my bag. I had a Polaroid camera with me! I wanted "before and after" pictures to send to my mother. I took them and asked the producer and director, "Do you mind . . .?" "Yes, we do," they said. "But it's only for my mother." "Please don't send them," they said, "What if she gives them to somebody?" But I sent them all the same.

Did any of the fans manage to break in?

A couple of them managed to sneak in, tricking people with all kinds of stories. They'd come to my dressing-room and say quickly, "Excuse me, I'm going to have a convention and can you . . . I can't wait . . . here's my card . . . will you call me?" I haven't gone to a convention yet. But nobody broke into a set. What happened was, somebody stole something—the plans or some of the designs of sets.

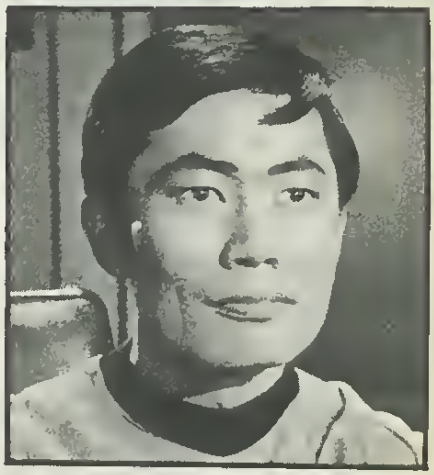
How did you get on with the crew?

Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner were very nice to us, myself and the other new actor, Stephen Collins . . . Ilia has a romantic thing about Steve, you know. He was on my planet and got very involved with me. We meet up again on the Enterprise and there's still something between us. I'm angry with him at first. Why did he leave Delta without telling me? And he said, "If I'd stayed, you know what would have happened". And I understand.

I don't.

All, well, once you love a Deltan, you become their slave. When I come on the ship, everybody, especially the women, are stunned. "But—she's a Deltan. What's going to happen to the crew?" So I have to say I've taken an oath of celibacy.

Ilia is a contrast to Spock's character—he's so very logical. There's a beautiful scene with Spock in the film. I think the fans are going to love it. It's when . . . well, it's a very nice scene. I'm not going to



Top: *Newcomers Willard Decker (played by Stephen Collins) and Ilia (Persis Khambatta) at a joint birthday party thrown by the cast and crew.* Above: *The man that Persis replaces, Sulu former helmsman/navigator. But don't worry, Sulu is still among the crew of the Enterprise*

say any more! Well . . . you're going to see an unusual side to Spock's character.

I don't know which you enjoy most: the filming or not talking about it.

My first day I was absolutely nervous. I didn't know how to say the lines, all these words were very unusual to me. I was scared stiff. Everybody else—Spock, Kirk, McCoy, Scotty, Sulu, Uhura, Chekov and Nurse, now Doctor Chapel—went straight into their characters and I didn't know what to do. Then, Gene Roddenberry gave me an an analysis of the character and I was able to get into it. I soon settled in and yes, I enjoyed it all.

You had a better deal than most, I suppose. Being bald meant an extra hour in bed, no rushing in for make-up and hairdressing.

On the contrary, I had to be in much earlier. Spock and I were the first ones in. Our make-up took the longest. I even decided to live close to the studios, just two minutes away . . . I had to be made up early because the after-five shadow came up after lunch. They couldn't do close-ups of me, then. My make-up was very thick though—my head, you see is part of my skin, part of my face in that respect. It took me 45 minutes to clean my head after the shooting every day. And I suffered from colds very much. Every time I sneezed, everybody was around me with hankies. They didn't want me to get sick. They were so protective—a day lost could cost $30,000. But I couldn't wear much on my head to keep warm, you see, because of the make-up.

No head warmers, but some brand new uniforms for the crew, we hear.

Oh yes, very nice. But they are very simple. Some of the other costumes are out of this world. Really beautiful designs by Bob Fletcher.

What's the position with the film today? We've heard it's rather in limbo.

No! We finished shooting at the end of January, now they're doing special effects. That should take about six months and the film is being released in December. I went to see the rushes every day and they're great—also I learnt more. And having Robert Wise as the director was marvellous. He was a brilliant person—the patience, the understanding this man had, working with all those people, having sets that were in a sense very, very difficult and dangerous. And being an editor, he knows where he's cutting all the time.

What do you mean, dangerous sets?

I hope you will look at some of the sets on that screen and sympathise with us. I tell you something: it could have been instant death on those sets for me. Wearing high-heeled shoes and walking on those sets. A couple of people had accidents. The audiences will probably think it was easy.,

Is this rocky terrain, or gimmicky sets that fall away, break open?

Oh . . . I'm not going to tell you anything more. You must watch the film!

We will; but you're our guide for now.

I went blind for two days at the end of shooting. The day we finished, we had to use these neon lights. We were shooting until 10.30 pm. I went home and about 2 am I woke up with my eyes burning. I rubbed them, opened them and couldn't see a thing. It was a kind of snow blindness, they told me next day. I didn't understand snow blindness. "Don't worry about it," they said. They bandaged my eyes, because they didn't want me to move my eyes—and two days later, I was okay. Except for another week of splitting headaches and keeping out of the sun.

How many people were struck down like this?

I was the only person affected. I tried to be the brave one, trying to keep my eyes open in profile. The other person with me was unhurt.

Is India awaiting the movie as much as we are?

Oh no. We don't have American or English programmes on tv. If we're very, very good people, on a Sunday we'll have a Hindy film. Besides that, there is only a one-hour programme a day—on agriculture. Television in India is basically for the village people to learn things. Education.

As a fan of Star Trek *yourself, how do you think other fans will take to the movie?*

I wish I could say . . . I wish I could predict that. I just hope they'll love it. . .

What was your own favourite episode in the tv series?

To be very honest, I started to watch the series rather too late . . . But once I liked very much—I don't know the name, but I'm sure you or the fans will—is when Capt Kirk meets a woman who transfers her soul into him—and he becomes the woman. Seeing Capt Kirk having a tantrum like a woman was wonderful!

You did come into it late! Most fans remember that show rather fondly too—it was the 78th and last show of the three-year series: Turnabout Intruder.*

"Fred Phillips, Spock's make-up man, shaved my head. I didn't realise he was crying as he did it—everyone around me was crying!"

I liked that story very much!

Anything like it happen in the movie?

I think I've said enough. It would be nice to say more. But we're all keeping quiet. We don't want to spoil it for you. Wait and see in December.

Well, put it another way: what has the movie got that the tv series never had?

More special effects. More sound., More music—we've a special sound system. All the actors that have come back. Robert Wise. A better story. And . . .

A bald Persis Khambatta?

Yes!

By the way, what did you do with all your hair?

I kept it, of course. Funny thing, I keep getting fan letters with cheques: Please send me a lock of your hair. I send the money back. My hair isn't for sale—unless I sell it for a million dollars to one of those rich Arabs who wants to buy it as a treasure.

Interview by Tony Crawley

**As if you need reminding,* Turnabout Intruder, *written by Arthur M. Singer, directed by Herb Wallerstein, closed the* Star Trek *tv series in 1969. Sandra Smith played Dr Janice Lester, who took over the Enterprise after a mind-body transfer shot Kirk's mind into her body and vice versa.*

...THINGS..TO..COME....

Compiled by Tony Crawley

Supermess

Warner Brothers won't release **Superman 2**

Maybe they read my recent suggestion that the sequel film looks like being only a collection of bits and pieces, odds and ends, and not the way Richard Donner intended. A kind of **Superman 1½**, in fact. Whatever the reason, Warners have decided that enough is enough. The Salkinds can go their own way and find a new distributor.

This is the latest shock in a series of reverberations emanating from the Pinewood Studios headquarters of the sequel film. First, came the dismissal of director Richard Donner. Next, the big fight by Christopher Reeve to improve his money, and he hoped, the style of the sequel—to match the overall concept of Donner. Next, if more quietly, came an apparent refusal by Richard Lester to complete the sequel, an impossible task for anyone apart from Donner. Guy Hamilton, originally named as the director of the first film, has agreed to finish filming **Superman 2**.

Shooting starts again on July 30, and should be over by Christmas. But I rather doubt it. Although Donner and others have always been quoted as saying that as much as 70% of **Superman 2** had been shot during the production of the first film, I now understand that, in fact, only about 50% is in the can.

Which ever way you look at it. **Superman** is now a Supermess. Unless Hamilton can rescue the fat from the fire.

SuperChris

Meanwhile, Chris Reeve has solved his differences with the Salkinds. Slowly, the details of this battle are emerging . . . The producers were suing him for allegedly walking out of the sequel. Chris says he was merely trying to clarify odd portions of his contract, and trying to ensure Donner's concept for the sequel film. His original contract was for $25,000 plus $5,000 a week after 52 weeks' shooting. This fee was, apparently, to cover both **Superman 1** and **2**, to be filmed concurrently—much in the manner the Salkinds had made their **Three Musketeers** films.

Fine, but things didn't gell out that way. Shooting on **2** did not continue alongside **1**—it had to be aborted late last year in order to complete the first film on time. By doing so, Chris Reeve felt the Salkinds had broken their original deal, and he decided to negotiate a new one. And after a lot of argy-bargy, he got it—$500,000 for **No 2** and a seven-figure sum when, and if, they make **Superman 3**, supposedly in 1981.

Before returning to cape and boots duty, Chris Reeve will make his first Hollywood starring movie—**Somewhere in Time** based on Richard Matheson's novel, **Bid Time Return**. Max Von Sydow co-stars with **Galactica's** Jane Seymour and the **Jaws 2** man, Jeannot Szwarc directs.

Disney in Space

Then again, Disney does save some money. Just before the credits titles were being shot for the British-made silly space fantasy, **The Spaceman and King Arthur** (*Things to Come* **Starburst 5**)—they changed the title. It's now to be known world-wide as—(wait for it)—**Unidentified Flying Oddball**.

Re-enter: 3-D

Tokyo's Video Films are making an sf series for home consumption on tv – in 3-D. They've already had one fairly successful try, and it works, I'm told.

In the States, Avco-Embassy have a different form of 3-D – Visurama. It's utilised for one scene of Don Coscarelli's horror film, **Phatasm** – when silver spheres suddenly fly around the cinema as they appear on the screen. When a film needs a gimmick like that, you know, deep in your heart of hearts, that . . . it stinks!

Special Finance

George Lucas and Co are continually thankful to Alan Ladd Jr for okaying the making of **Star Wars**, which every other Hollywood firm turned down. Ladd is not exactly sorry with his decision, either. His contract as production chief of 20th Century-Fox calls for 1.5% of the net Fox profits once they make a certain figure. That's why he's the highest-paid studio executive in Hollywood. Last year he had a seven-fold increase in pay – a total of $1,944,384. Of course, if he insists on backing everything Robert Altman and Werner Herzog want to make, he could find himself out of pocket this year. Never mind, **The Empire Strikes Back** opens in 1980.

Schneer Magic

The reason producer Charles Schneer is making his new film with Ray Harryhausen, **Clash of the Titans**, for MGM instead of Columbia, is a matter of finance. **Titans** is an expensive project and Columbia just couldn't make up its mind so Schneer took the idea to MGM and got an immediate go-ahead. (He'll return to Columbia to make the four films left under his twelve-picture deal signed in 1958).

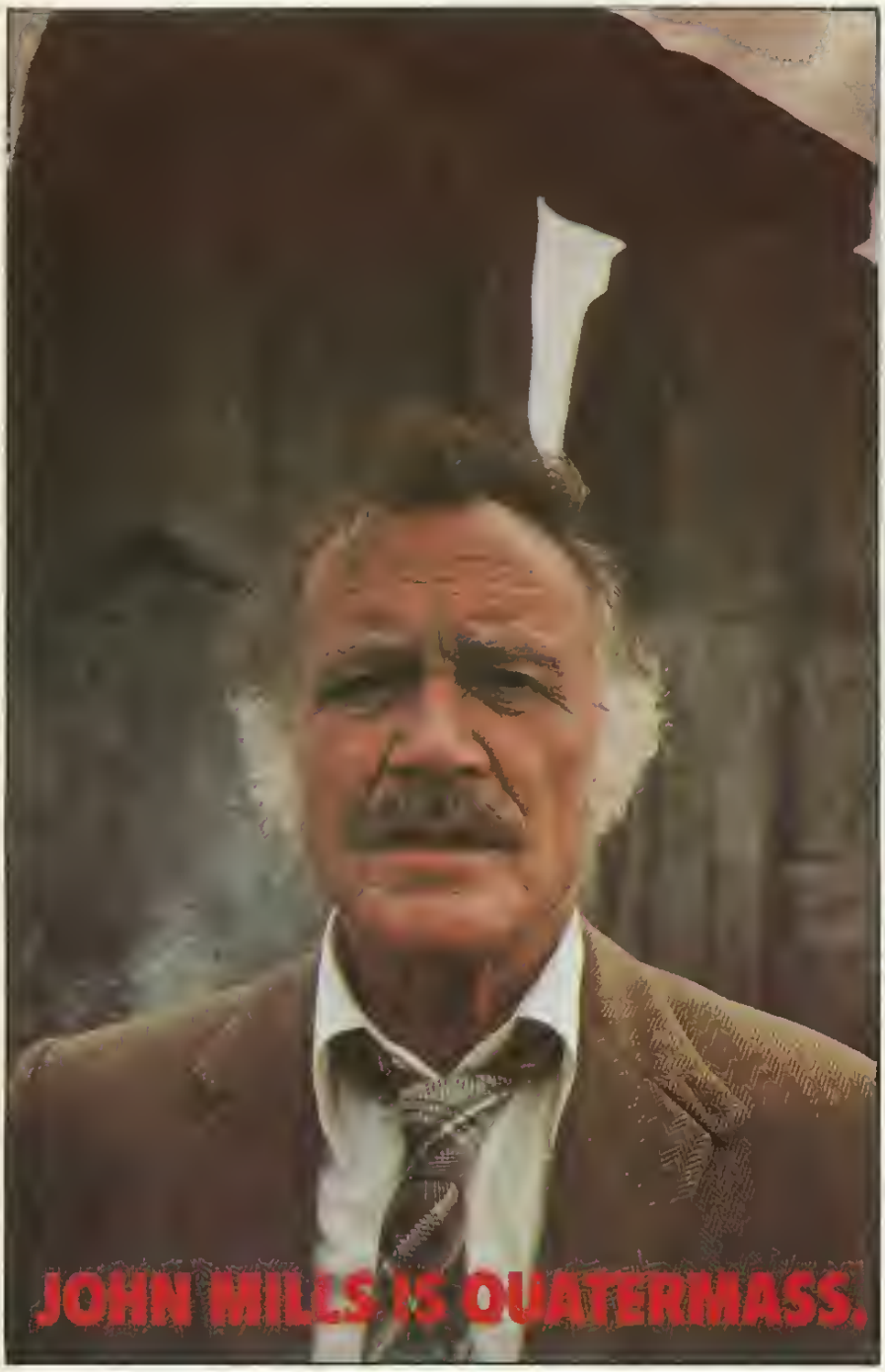
Clearly, **Titans**, based on classic Greek mythology, is a big departure for Schneer and Harryhausen. The budget is $15 million, including $5 million in planning costs alone. Locations will be in Spain, Italy and Malta, and they have a big name cast for once. Well, they don't come much bigger than Sir Laurence Olivier who is playing Zeus. Scriptwriter Beverly Cross' wife, Maggie Smith—an Oscar-winner this year for **California Suite**—is Thetis, Claire Boom will be Hera, Sian Phillips is Cassiopeia, Susan Fleetwood Athena, and you obviously can't miss out Burgess Meredith —so he's in as Ammon.

Schneer's new hero, far removed from the wooden Patrick Wayne of yore, is Harry Hamlin, seen recently to good effect as the boxer in **Movie Movie**, plus the **Studs Lonigan** tv series. He's Perseus with the lovely, swan-necked Judi Bowker as Andromeda. Shooting should be completed by the end of the year, then Ray Harryhausen takes his usual time on his effects work and the film is due for release in the summer of '81 . . . by which time it'll be a bargain at that budget. Columbia should have known better. Schneer's last film, **Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger** (1977) cost $3 million and has earned $20 million so far . . .

Re-make

Michael Powell's terrific 1960 horror cult film, **Peeping Tom**, is about to be re-made. Set in New York this time, not London. Company behind the project is a new French group called Whodunnit. As it's also re-making **Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde** for the umpteenth occasion, it should be called Redoit.

.THINGS..TO..COME.....TH



Quatermass

Sir John Mills is bringing the legendary Professor Quatermass back to our tv screens in a £1 million version of an original script by *Quatermass* creator Nigel Kneale.

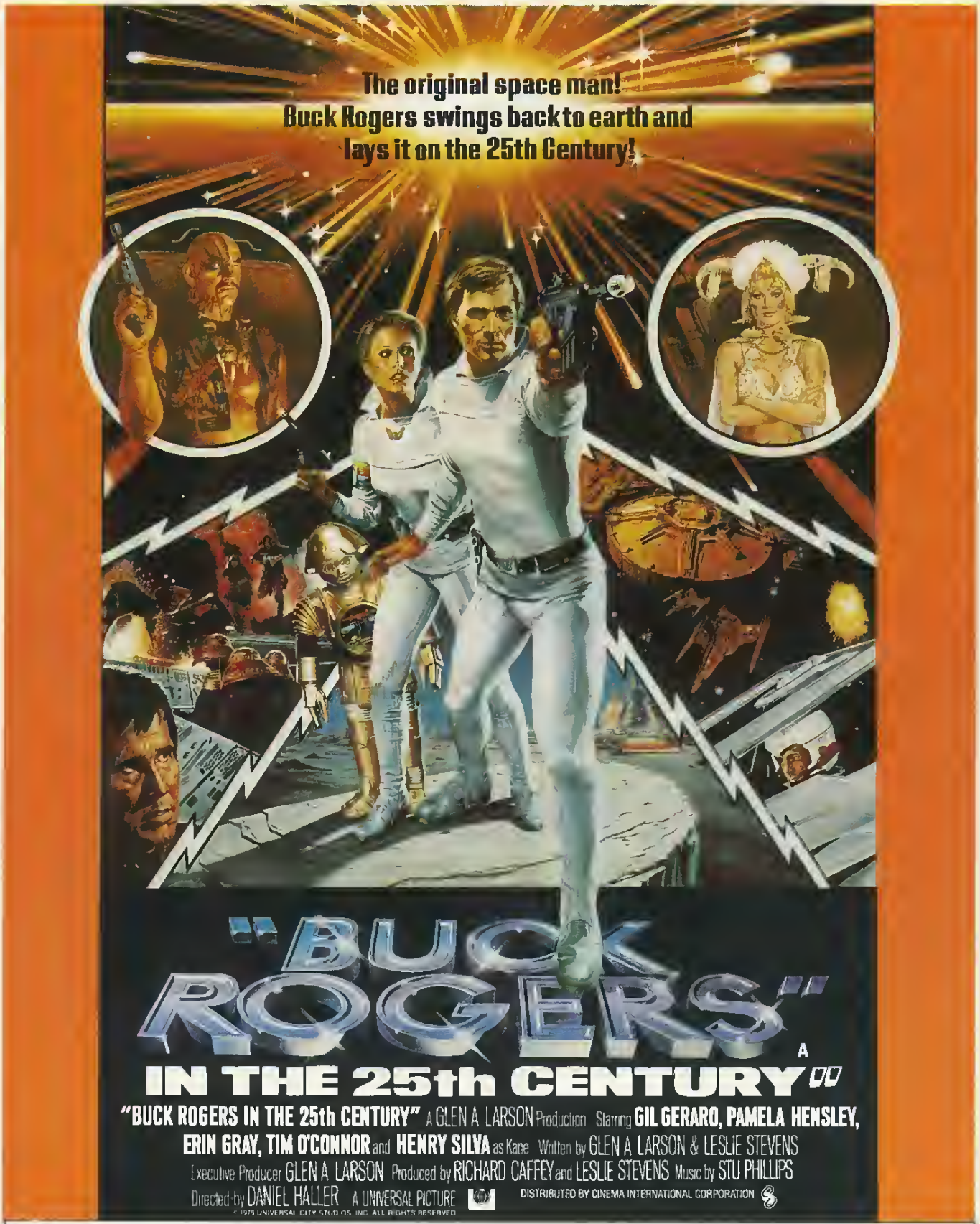
The production company, Euston Films, are playing things close to their collective chest at the time of going to press, but Starburst has determined that the story is set some time in the future when civilisation is going out of fashion in Britain. Violence has brought everyday life to a standstill. Armed gangs roam the streets, engaged in running battles with rivals and the police. While all this goes on, the government continue to waste valuable resources sending rockets into space. The adventure really gets underway when the rocket is mysteriously destroyed and Quatermass begins an investigation of his own.

The new series is produced by Ted Childs and directed by Piers Haggard and is due to debut around autumn this year.

Martian Chronicles

Ray Bradbury's **Martian Chronicles** have finally reached the small screen. Produced by Charles (**Spiderman**) Fries as a 6 hour mini-series along the lines of **Washington Behind Closed Doors** for American tv, **Chronicles** will be edited down for theatrical release in Europe.

The **Martian Chronicles** relates the first manned space fight to Mars and the colonisation of the planet and the reaction of the native Martians to the settlers. Starring Rock Hudson the tv show/movie is set for a spring 1980 release.



FROM JULY 26 **RITZ** LEICESTER SQUARE

ABC FULHAM ROAD
BAYSWATER
EDGWARE ROAD

CLASSIC OXFORD STREET
(OPPOSITE TOTTENHAM COURT RD TUBE)

AND AT **ABC** AND OTHER LEADING CINEMAS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

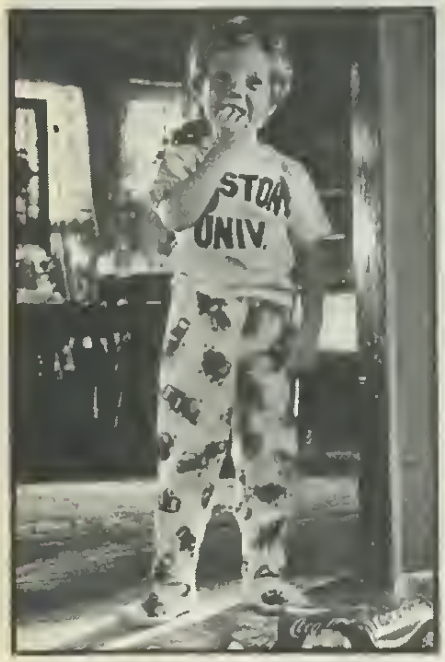
.....THINGS..TO..COME...

Superkid

Being in the **Superman** cast clearly helps careers. After new films for Chris Reeve, Margot Kidder, now it's the turn of Jeff East. In fact, he seems to be making a new career out of playing the early life of heroes. After being the younger Superman, Jeff becomes writer Jack London in **Klondike Fever**, which covers the 21-year-old London's foray from San Francisco to the Klondike goldfields, which inspired such London books as **White Fang** and **Call of the Wild**. Rod Steigar plays the heavy, Soapy Smith; Lorne Greene, from **Battlestar Galactica**, is the legendary mountie, Sam Steele, and the Canadian film also features **Space 1999**er Barry Morse and the adorable Angie Dickinson. Shooting takes place in a restored gold rush town called Barkerville, in British Columbia.

New Encounter

Cary Guffey – the kid from **CE3K** – is making another space trip. Italian style, this time. He joins big, bearded Bud Spencerand his new screen partner, ex-British heavyweight boxing champ Joe Bugner, in **The Sheriff and the Satellite Kid**. It's an Italian movie, but the location is Atlanta, Georgia.



Locations

Ken Russell's American movie debut – which is Paddy Chayeksy's script **Altered States**, all about the world of science – is, I'm told, being made on location "in New York, Boston, Mexico and in the uncharted landscapes of the mind". Not Russell's weird mind, I trust.

Deal

Hollywood producer Walter Seltzer's row with MGM and CBS tv companies about the low-price selling of his 1973 film, **Soylent Green**, to tv in a package deal, has finally been settled. Out of court. And no one is saying one word about who got what and why or how much.

Hypersonics

Mork's mate, Fonzie, is going into film and tv production in a big way. Like $24,500,000. . . . Among the tv movies Henry Winkler's Fair Dinkum company is setting up with, of course, Paramount, is **Star Flight One**, an original tale by Robert Young and Peter Brooke. Subject: Hypersonic transportation. The next step beyond supersonic. "At first," says Winkler's partner, Alan Manning, "it seemed to be a story of a big rescue in outer space. In working it out, we tried to add elements to take it out of **Grand Hotel in the Air**. With the help of some damn good input from ABC-tv, we came up with a story that has a strong moral base." The project also has full co-operation from NASA, including locations in Houston. Otherwise, most of the movie will be shot in Los Angeles inside the mock-up of McDonald's Douglas' HSY plene. "In reality," adds Winkler, "we're just a few years away from it. It's happening now!" And he didn't even say Heyyy!

Obituary

Al Hodge, 66, who used to be **The Green Hornet** on radio and **Captain Video** in the early days of US tv, died on March 19. A one-time radio announcer at WXYZ-Detroit, he switched to their new-found radio serials (starting with **The Lone Ranger**) as **The Green Hornet** in 1940. He later became the star of Dumont Network's **Captian Video** show (succeeding Richard Coogan) in 1949, until it proved too expensive for a local New York station to mount. This programme was "tv's first blest-off to the stars" according to Gary Gerani and Paul H. Schulman's *Fantastic Television* book. Video was officially described as an "electronic wizard, master of time end space and guardian of the safety of the world." He invented such weapons as the Option Scillometer, which gava him x-ray vision – and the Cosmic Vibrator, which could jangle a man to death (and a woman too, no doubt). Tragically type-cast as an actor, Al Hodge finished up working in real estate, as a clerk and even as a bank guard.

Norman Tokar, 59, long-time Disney director, died in April from a heart attack in Los Angeles. He first signed with the Disney studio in 1961 and his last film was **The Cat From Outer Space**.

John Robinson, 70, BBC-tv's original Prof Quatermass, died March 6, of cancer. Liverpool-born, his acting career began on stage in 1929. His early films included **The Lion has Wings, The Constant Husband, Fortune is a Woman** and **Hammer the Toff**. He made his name as Quatermass in Nigel Kneale's **The Quatermass Experiment** in 1950, and in two other sf serials–only to see the film role going to an old Hollywood hack like Brian Donlevy.

Steve Sekely (Istavan Szekely), the Hungarian-born director of the film version of John Wyndham's **The Day of the Triffids**, died from stomach cancer in Palm Springs in March. An ex-journalist, he entered movies in Germany in the late 1920s, making his directing debut in 1929 and working in Germany and Hungary until emigrating to America in 1938. He made his US debut with **A Miracle on Main Street** in 1940. His Hollywood work, though, were usually B-pictures for PRC, Monogram and Republic–titles such as **Behind Prison Walls, Revenge of the Zombies, Women in Bondage**. In 1945, he set up his own firm, Star Pictures, and continued churning out supports for Republic, Lippert and other smallfry. Indeed, **The Day of the Triffids**, made in Britain with the unlikely cast of Howard Keel and Janette Scott in 1963, proved his best work, an sf classic according to several critics. In 1969, he returned to Hungary to re-make his 1934 classic, **Lila Akac**, as **The Girl Who Liked Purple Flowers**. Hungary will remember him best.

THINGS..TO..COME.....

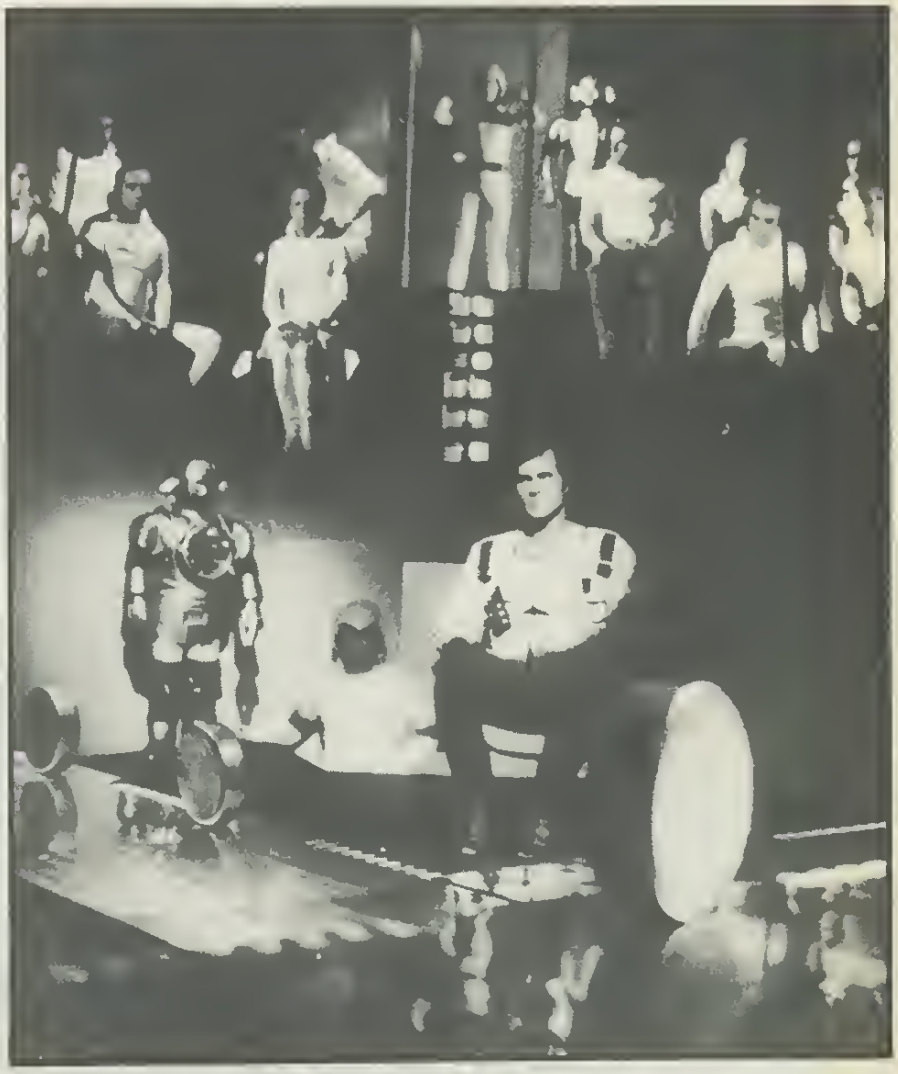
A as in Adult

George Romero is trying to get a new censor rating in the States. A for adult. He refuses to have his **Dawn of the Dead** classified X, because X over there usually signifies porno. Ironically, his **Night of the Living Dead** in 1968 was rated PG (parental guidance required), rather like our A certificate. **Night** cost a meagre $114,000 and has so far earned beyond $12 million. **Dawn** cost $1,700,000 and is well into profit from its business in Italy and Japan alone. "It's really meant to be a schlock film," says amiable George. "And that's what it is." Which is probably why at the Press reception of **Dawn of the Dead** in New York, the menu included bloody maries, of course, plus "ghoulash" and "screamcheese cake". Very Adult!

Romero's **Martin** is finally due for a British release, by the way . . . thanks to John Carpenter's favourite British distributor, Michael Myers of Miracle Films.

Down Under

Normally, the news that an Australian company is making an sf film wouldn't excite me. Don't get me wrong, most of the new Aussie movies are great. But their sf and horror quickies are as bad as any other country's. **Sparks** should be different. It's being produced by David Elphick, whose **Newsfront** was the best film out of Australia since their vibrant new wave began. Scripted by film editor Ian Barry, **Sparks** is the tale of a blinded movie-maker. His brain is wired up to an image pattern machine to help him come up with new script ideas. (Another Australian project, **Starstruck**, is not about space, but showbusiness, by the way!)



A scene from the forthcoming movie, **Buck Rogers**

Axed

Universal-MCA have killed off the **Battlestar Galactica** tv series, which so far has only shown up here in the form of a cinema film. The reason: poor ratings and big budgets. At $750,000 a show, **Galactica** was the most expensive series ever mounted by American television. An impossible figure! For the same amount, two average hour-long tv series could be made . . . although it must be admitted that stars like Walter Matthau earn as much as that for a single film. Plus profit percentages.

Buck's Bucks

Also from Universal and producer Glenn A. Larson, and also first made for television, **Buck Rogers in the 25th Century**, is doing very well in American cinemas. Over five days in 880 theatres, it pulled in $5,241,000 which assuredly puts it well into profit. The movie (first called simply **Buck Rogers**, until Universal found a lot of people didn't know who the heck he was), has its world premiere in Little Rock, Arkansas, the home town of the screen's latest Buck—Gil Gerard. He's the best thing in the film, which has its tongue well in cheek throughout 89 minutes, fondly mocking **Star Wars** and **Galactica** as it goes. It's not quite as impressive as it should be, though—the effects are tacky, and well, it looks like what it is: an overblown made-for-tv movie. Pamela Hensley is Princess Ardala, and the villian of the piece, Draco is none other than **Dr No** himself Joseph Wiseman. But there is, of course, a tiny robot thingie, called Twiki. Felix Silla is inside the metal casing, and probably does a very clever job. But the success of Twiki is due to his voice. And Glen Larson hired the funniest voice in town—none other than Mel Blanc, the man who speaks for Bugs Bunny, Sylvester and Tweetie Pie!

THINGS..TO..COME....TH

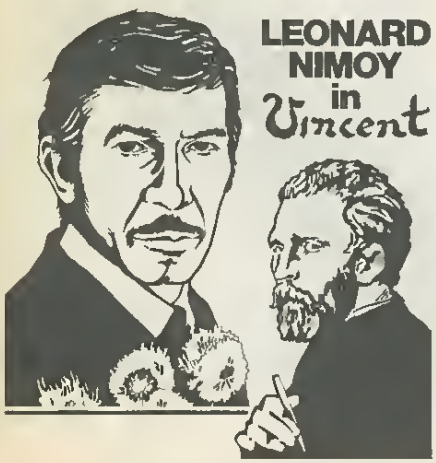
Exorcist Encore

This is a health warning: **Tha Exorcist** is coming back with a devastating new soundtrack. You ain't heard nothin' yet. Or so it seems. William Friedkin has been working on the new track for a 70mm re-issue. He went wild for 70mm's clarity after seeing Terrence Malik's **Days of Heaven**. "**The Exorcist** has gained clarity and sharpness along with a depth and vivid quality it never had before," says Friedkin. And you still can't see the wires on Linda Blair's floating bed! As for the Dolby assisted sound. Friedkin says he can now put the audience in the middle of the film—"it has much more of an emotional impact." He hasn't recorded anything new but has made use of various effects and indeed, dialogue, taped but never used in the 1973 original (which, incidently, won an Oscar for his sound men), Robert Newman and Chris Knudsen. "The material was there," explains Friedkin, "but the opportunity to utilise it in its best form wasn't available in December, 1973. It is now."

The cost of this re-working is a mere $150,000 (not counting the cost of the new 70mm prints of the film). Friedkin is delighted that Warner Brothers let him improve the film. "They didn't have to do this. They could have simply sent out the old prints and still made money."

Treking

Leonard Nimoy is still treking around 14 American cities with his one-man show, **Vincent**. He's considering taking the performance to Broadway, if he can find an intimate enough theatre. He's packed out 1800-seaters, but prefers small joints. Leonard wrote the show himself – the life of Van Gogh as seen through his brother's eyes, based on 600 letters from Vincent to Theo. Nimoy wanted it to be strictly a one-man deal . . . but as he projects Van Gogh paintings on to huge screens, and uses the Don McLean disc of "Vincent", he soon collected 200 lbs of scenery and projection equipment and needs a roadie and full stage crew.



French Filling

French tv has a new animated space show – unlike anything the Japanese make. It's called **Galactically Yours**. It comprises 230 episodes – lasting between 15 and 30 seconds each. Yes, *seconds!* You've got it in one – it's an intermission filler, the latest in the French cartoon ideas to bridge the short gaps between programmes. This one covers 230 attempts (and failures) of one stranded male astronaut trying to bridge another gap – the one between himself and the good-looking astronette just a mere galactic leap away on another planet. It will take French viewers close on four hours to find out if, at long last, he makes it!

Gothic TV

Independent New York producer Dick Perin is taping a series of plays based on best-selling Gothic horror novels for television. He's using just one camera, tape and $45,000 a story. His debut offering is Susan Howard's **Dark Shora**. If that sells, he's ready to set the rest in motion. Are you listening, BBC?

Down Under

Flashes

RAI-tv of Italy is producing a series of horror tales from the works of Edgar Allen Poe . . . Michael Caine goes straight from **Beyond Tha Poseidon Adventura to The Island**, from the latest book of **Jaws** writer Peter Benchley . . . A rather smelly horror flick is afoot, or underfoot, in Los Angeles – **Below The Devil Lies** is set beneath the 1940 Los Angeles sewers . . Jeffrey Konvitz's sequel to **Tha Santinel** is out in paperback: **Tha Apocalypse** . . . **Body Snatcher** Kevin McCarthy joins John Ritter in MGM's **Captain Avenger** flick . . . Marlon Brando joins the modern horror genre in **Tha First Deadly Sin**, as a cop investigating a grisly axe murder; Brian Hutton directs instead of Roman Polanski who can't set foot in America . . . MGM have a great fantasy about ready from Charles Daklor's **The Second Son**, about a construction worker falling from the 24th floor of a New York skyscraper and provoking "the most extraordinary chain of events to occur in over 2,000 years" . . . John D'Hara's **Appointment in Samara** to be turned into a tv mini-series . . . Ivan Tors, man behind all those salt-water tv series of yore, going back to work in Miami, making the underwater sequences for **Sea Dragon of Loch Ness**, no less . . . John Gielgud and Susan George will star again in Anglia tv's second series of **Roald Dahl's Tales of the Unexpected . . . The Incredibla Hulk** starts on French tv, as soon as they decide what to call him . . . And finally, Esther: You can forget those Irish jokes. One Irish firm invested $100,000 into **Superman**. They're crying all the way to the bank now.

Sapphire and Steel

Scheduled for release in July 1979 **Sapphire and Steel** will co-star Joanna Lumley and David McCallum in a 13-part early evening series. The premise revolves around a psychic research theme. "Every now and then, apparently inexplicable things occur—events that seem beyond the limits of probability. We cannot explain these phenomena simply because our minds are limited and unable to cope with the thought that there may be other dimensions —dimensions we cannot envisage or understand." So states the publicity handout!

Yes, but what's it *about?*

Starburst Awards

If you still haven't voted in the Starburst Fantasy Film Awards, be warned—time is running short. So short, in fact, that we have decided to omit the nomination stage.

So, if you wish to take part we urge that you scribble down on a piece of paper your votes in the following categories:

Movies: *Best Film, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Newcomer, Best Special Effects, Best Music, Best Screenplay, Best Director, Best Film of All Time, and Outstanding Achievement by an Individual.*

Television: *Best tv Show, Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Newcomer, Best Special Effects, Best Music, Best Teleplay, Best Director, Best tv Show of All Time, Outstanding Achievement by an Individual.*

The only condition is that except for the last two categories in each section each vote must be cast for a film/tv show that went on general release or had its first airing in 1978 (that means **StarWars** to **Superman** and all those in between).

The final results will be announced at the Second Annual Fantasy Film Convention, Bloomsbury Centre Hotel, London 15/16 September, 1979 and will be published in a later issue of **Starburst**. ■

STARBURST LETTERS

I'm glad to see that at least one sf magazine is taking notice of **Doctor Who (Starburst 6)**. I've been an avid follower of the Doctor for many years and joined the Doctor Who Appreciation Society two years ago.

Admittedly the special effects of the show could be better, but at least the BBC does try to compensate with the plots which are a lot more interesting than some seen on other tv sf shows. Another important point is that the show is British and the Doctor himself must be the longest running tv hero ever.

The main advantage of **Starbust** is that it doesn't drag up **Star Trek** every issue. I get very frustrated when some magazines insist on producing reams and reams of drooling copy on what a wonderful show **Ster Trek** was.

Your readers might like to know that there is another Doctor Who Appreciation Society Convention this year, the third in three years.

John Pannell, Chelmsford, Essex.

I am writing to congratulate you on your very interesting article on **Dark Star**, reviewed by John Fleming, and the interview with John Carpenter by Tony Crawley in **Starburst 5**. What was missing from the piece was an exterior shot of the ship, Dark Star, itself. Perhaps you could fit a picture of the space ship in a future issue of **Starburst**.

Dark Star is the best science fiction film I have ever seen. For me the movie outclasses **Star Wars, 2001** and **Close Encounters of the Third Kind**, the main reason for this being the superb script and direction, not forgetting the excellent acting by Kuntholm, Narrelle and O'Bannon. The special effects are not quite of the standard of **Ster Wars**, but they are impressive considering the lack of funds. Thank you, **Sterburst**, for a great magazine.

Devid Beiley, Lichfield, Steffs.

If you'd care to take a look at the SF Poster Gallery *in* **Starburst 10**, *David, you'll see that we did manage to find an alternative version of the Dark Star poster which featured the space ship Dark Star. It's not quite what you asked for but we hope it will keep you happy for the time being.*

Sterburst is to say the least a fascinating magazine and it is showing signs of developing into Britain's best film publication of any sort. I was particularly pleased with the interview with Terry Nation in issue 6.

What's happened to your telefantasy series? You geve us **Ster Trek** and promised us **The Prisoner**, but the latter has yet to appear.

Metthew Waterhouse, Heywerds Heeth, Sussex.

As you'll doubtless be aware, Matthew, we did manage to fit an extensive piece on **Lost in Spece** *into* **Ster-burst 10** *but your final remark puzzled us. The* **Prisoner** *article did, in fact, appear way back in* **Starburst 2**. *Guess you must have missed that issue, so allow us to draw your attention to the reply to A. G. Morris' letter!*

Well, you said you would be around after the others faded end, by the Force, you were right.

Starburst is what the loyal British sf fan wants.

Starburst is a well-balanced magazine with a good collection of material. Relevant material. The interview with Terry Nation in **Starburst 6** was interesting and contained (gasps in amazement and delight) stills from the early series of **Doctor Who**, which are rarely,

if ever, seen.

Things to Come and *Book World* are very informative. I love the idea of the movie poster in the centrespread. The film reviews are of the same high standard. Judging from the material you have been running, **Starburst** will be around for years to come.

Micheel Welch, Besildon, Essex.

Starburst is the best of all science fiction magazines. It has a more serious approach to the field, whereas the American magazines tend to treat sf like bubble gum joke cards as though sf was something to snigger et.

Issues 1, 2 and 3 were exceptional, aside from the **Wizerds** and **Prisoner** articles which were boring.

Issues 4, 5 and 6 were, in my opinion, better than the first three. **Starburst** seems to be improving every month and I hope it continues to do so. The only letdown in issue 4 were the articles on Tolkien and Silliphant. But then you can't please everybody.

The book and record reviews are a great help to collectors, keep them in by all means. I always look forward to the letters page and *Things to Come*. Please keep the movie posters in the centre pages.

There has been much criticism of many tv sf series recently in **Sterburst**. However I think you should include articles on them. They may be put together on very tight budgets but they are still very entertaining.

I would like to see articles on **Blakes 7, Space 1999, Doctor Who, Plenet of the Apes, Invaders, Six Million Doller Man/Bionic Woman** and film reviews of **Logan's Run** and **Dey of the Triffids**.

I wish your magazine the very best for the future. Long may it reign.

John Beerdmore, Burton-on-Trent.

Due to your great airmail subscription service I received my copy of number 8 the other day and was real pleased to see you had finally got around to covering the Aussie sci-fi scene with your great feature on **Infinity**. Alan Murdoch must have been very lucky to crack the secrecy surrounding this movie, and can't wait to read further articles about it.

Australia so often gets forgotten as the birth place of the movies. I've done a bit of research myself on the history of Aussie sf movies and discovered what must be the first sf movie ever made anywhere. It was called the **Heunted Billabong** and appears to have been about the strange mutilation of sheep on a station in Coonabarabran. It was made in 1911 and was actually shot in the old Padstow Studios in Sydney, which have long since been demolished.

From what I can gather from the research I have done, the sheep were mutilated by visitors from outer space, and this is only revealed at the end of the movie. Before that it was assumed that it was the work of rabid dingoes (which if you don't know, are Aussie wild dogs), but at the end you find out that a flying saucer hed landed in the billabong and was using it as a base.

Needless to say, all surviving prints of the film have vanished but I got this info from an old paper which reviewed the movie. I dug around a bit and found in the Archive a shot of the director Tom Jackson. I am sending you this picture, I think its all that survives of the movie.

I liked all the articles in the magazine and especially pleased to see that compatriot John Baxter is back writing about sf movies.

I would have liked to known more about **Alien**, but the pictures were pretty good.

Keep up the good work and keep the "blue" flag flying.

Bruce G. Kennedy, Yagoona, Australia.

Thanks for the information, Bruce. We'll try to keep ahead of the **Infinity** *situation and pass the news along to our readers as it breaks.*

I was deeply shocked by the comments in **Sterburst 7** *(Starburst Letters)* concerning **Spece 1999**, which is in my opinion the best tv sf show to date.

So what if **1999** isn't 100% scientifically accurate: neither was **Star Trek, Close Encounters** and certainly not **Star Wers**. Remember: **Spece 1999** is pri-

marily entertainment not a tv adaptation of a university physics book!

Stephen Bell's remark (*Starburst Letters*, **Starburst 7**) that **Doctor Who** "sidestepped the problem of scientific plausibility" is just another way of saying "this cheap kids' show ignores all scientific concepts but I'm not going to admit it."

The reason **Doctor Who** lasted so long is that because the show is on such a low budget it is just as cheap to make new episodes as it is to repeat old ones. Anyway **Doctor Who** makes me laugh more than **Mork and Mindy** so I don't know how these readers can have the audacity to criticise **Space 1999**

I have the greatest respect for all Gerry Anderson's shows from supermarionation to the live action series like **UFO** and **Space 1999**. Looking (optimistically) forward to **Starburst's** coverage of this show

Paul Wakeman, Quarry Bank, W. Midlands.

As you probably know the recent lorry drivers dispute meant that the distribution of most publications has been sporadic, limited and much-delayed in some cases. I don't know about the distribution of in the UK generally, but **Starburst 5** (Dec 78) didn't go on sale here until 5th February. I would like to know what the position is with the competition in issue 5 which had a closing date of 31st January. Will the expiry date be extended.

But for the disputes, **Starburst 7** would have been on sale as I write this (9th February). Is it possible to purchase issues 6 and 7 of **Starburst** from you by post rather than hunt high and low around the newsagents?

A. G. Morris, Lancaster, Lancs.

We are all too aware of the problems surrounding the now notorious haulage strike of January. As far as the competition is concerned we decided to go ahead and judge the entries we had and award the prizes. A list of winners will appear at a later date. For those who have missed any issues of **Starburst** *just drop a line to the editorial offices stating which issues you need and including 60p per magazine (the price includes postage and handling). Cheques or postal orders only please, don't send cash.*

You can imagine my excitement when, on visiting my local newsagent, I saw a copy of **Starburst 8**, and on opening it up was treated to an excellent discussion on the forthcoming **Infinity**. I remember researching the background to **Infinity** some time ago in Australia, though I have since come to live in England. In those early days the project was known as **Into Infinity** and I was certainly pleased to see it will at last be made by the brilliant Goldblums as a movie, not just remain an idea.

The reason I came to England was to seek out the only remaining print of **60 Million Miles to Woomera** with the dream ending intact. I have already tried the British Film Institute and the National Film Archive. I was recently led on a false trail, when I thought I'd found a rare 16mm print, but it turned out to be an obscure Ray Harryhausen picture with a similar title. I did, however, manage to find two stills, one which details the fantastic complexity of the spacecraft used in the film. Where did you get your stills from? Obviously your photo archive must be very impressive.

In case you didn't know, as I mentioned earlier, the rarest prints of **60 Million Miles to Woomera** are the ones containing the dream ending, a sequence missing from the prints shown in the West, and in the East. Briefly, it relates how the young aborigine pilot, awakening to find his trip an illusion, witnesses (in a moment of great atmosphere) the arrival of the rocket he had just dreamed about. The most stunning effect at this point must be the young pilot's flashing neon boomerang that warns him of impending danger.

The only mistake in your excellent coverage was the incorrect captioning of the Goldblum photo. It is in fact Henry E. Goldblum who is standing—not Stanley B. Goldblum.

Now that I'm sure I'm on the right track for a personal copy of this movie (my local Dixons have informed me that they're on to something), I will arrange a screening to which all members of your research team, especially Alan Murdoch, are most welcome, so once again we can bring a classic sf film like **60 Million Miles to Woomera** to the public's attention.

Colin Joyson, Eltham, London.

We are very pleased to receive your letter, Colin. We didn't realise that prints of **60 Million Miles to Woomera** *were that difficult to come by. Author Alan Murdoch has in his collection an edited-down 8mm print of the film, which must have somehow reached Britain from Australia, but needless to say this short version does not contain the dream ending. There is a distinct possibility of an interview with director James Blacksmith when he visits Britain later this year, so keep watching* **Starburst**. *Remember, you read it here first!*

Send all comments and queries to us at:
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205–211 Kentish Town Road
London NW5.

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Starburst 4. The Hulk on tv, Tolkien on film, screenwriter Stirling Silliphant interviewed, War of the Worlds, Star Trek movie news, bonus comic strip. **60p.**

Starburst 5. The making of Superman the Movie, Dark Star review and interview, CE3K effects genius interviewed, Battlestar Galactica feature. **60p.**

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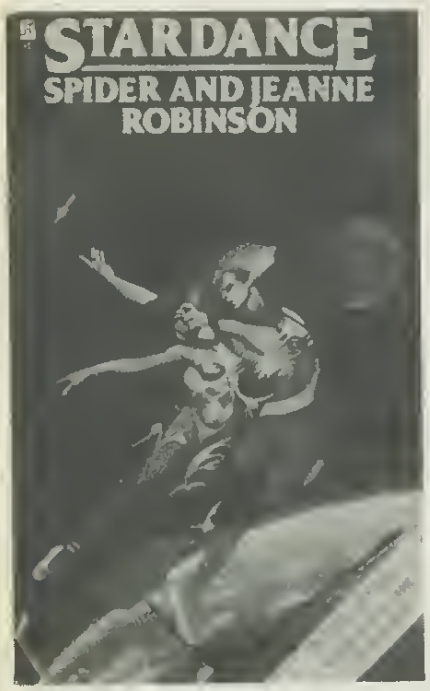
BOOK WORLD

Reviews by Alex Carpenter

STARDANCE by Spider & Jeanne Robinson
Although we are only half way through the year I think that **Stardance** is going to be my book of 1979. It is the kind of story that I would like to write myself but it has been so very well told that I would be wary of even making an attempt—one cannot compete with this sort of writing.

Stardance is the story of the creation of zero-gravity dancing, of the destiny of those who dance it and of humanity in general: I can only describe it as a beautiful book.

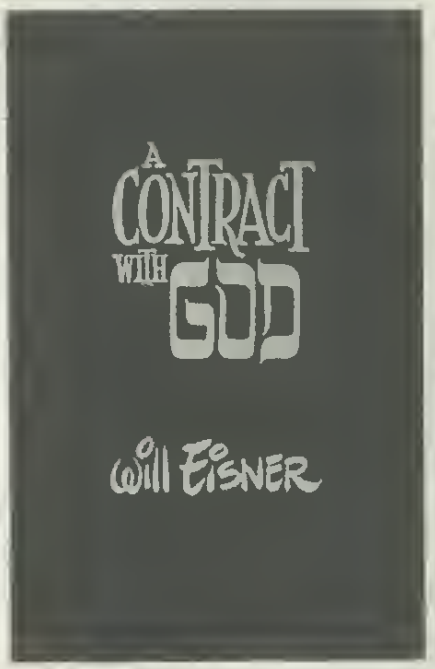
Spider & Jeanne Robinson are very obviously science fiction fans themselves and they have enhanced the story by judicious use of names familiar to other fans. A lot of sf readers will find it hugely entertaining and neophytes will enjoy it just as much. I could go on much longer praising this book but will finish with this—I have always admired Robert Heinlein's work and to say that **Stardance** reminds me of his later books is a very high compliment indeed.



Published by Futura Publications.
288 pages. £1.10.

A CONTRACT WITH GOD AND OTHER TENEMENT STORIES by Will Eisner
Will Eisner is a comic strip illustrator. That is a very simple statement understood by 99%, if not 100%, of the population: if I were to add that **The Spirit** was numbered among his creations, the term "comic strip illustrator" becomes misleading.

Mr Eisner created **The Spirit** 38 years ago and the stories he wrote and drew of that character are classics in their field. Today the strips are being reprinted in magazine form as the originals are much sought after and highly valued by the discerning comic collector. What makes his work on **The Spirit** so special is the atmospheric and cinematic way in



which the stories were told.

Now Eisner has brought his talents to bear on a much less heroic subject. Within this book he relates incidents in the lives of four residents of a New York tenement during the 1930's. It is not a very appealing subject but Eisner has forgotten none of his old touches and I read the book in one sitting. Credit should be given to the publishers—they have printed the stories in sepia tones on a very light cream paper and this not only enhances the artwork but gives the whole production an additional old-fashioned look.

As with most of these new ventures in comic publishing, it is a little expensive but is well worth the price.

Published by Baronet Publishing.
6"x 9". 192 pages. $4.95 Import

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
This book is a re-working of the *Marvel Super Special* magazine currently available. But in a paperback format it is going to reach a totally different audience, more likely to attract a casual buyer than a regular comic buyer. In full-colour throughout **Battlestar Galactica** is poor on capturing likenesses of the actors involved due to a contractual difficulty between Universal and Marvel comics.

The book adapts, fairly closely, the feature film that we see in our cinemas, and more accurately the tv pilot that American audiences saw.

As with the Conan comic/paperbacks each page contains only two or three frames per page, runnning to a length of 160 pages, but as the original *Marvel Super Special* is freely available in most newsagents perhaps the magazine version is a better buy.

Published by Ace Books.
160 pages Import. $1.95.

THE ILLUSTRATED HARLAN ELLISON edited by Byron Preiss
Byron Preiss' name is becoming synonomous with visual experimentaion amongst American publishers and fans and this latest publication serves to enhance that reputation.

As with the earlier **Illustrated Roger Zelazney**, this book is an anthology of the author's work but this time each story is illustrated by a different artist. Included here are **Deeper Than Darkness** (Wayne McLoughlin), **Croatoan** (Thomas Sutton, Alfredo Alcala and Stephen Dliff), **The Discarded** (Thomas Sutton) **Shattered Like A Glass Goblin** (William Stout) **Riding the Dark Train Out** (Ralph Reese) and **Looking For Kadak** (Dverton Loyd).

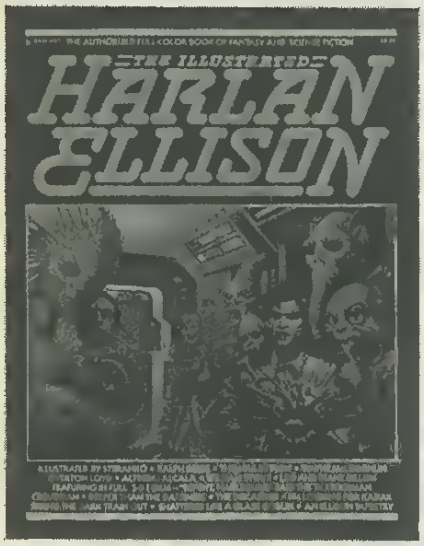
Each artist has brought his own interpretation to the story he has rendered and, whilst some are more successful than others, each succeeds in its own right. There is one further story in the book and this is **Repent Harlequin! Said the Ticktock Man.** For this story Preiss has called on Steranko, an artist with a reputation for experimentation and innovation of his own—thus the graphics accompanying this story are in 3-D (3-D glasses are supplied), and full marks must be given to the artist and editor for having the

BOOK WORLD

courege to revive this medium; especially so successfully.

A major fault with the Zelazney book was that included were paintings done to illustrate stories not included in the anthology. The editor has chosen to include e similar section called *An Ellison Tapestry* in this latest book: unfortunately it fails completely.

The Illustrated Harlan Ellison is another step forward for Byron Preiss and I can only hope that each new step he takes will be as much of an improvement as this book has been. Apart from the paperback version distributed in the UK this book was made



available in a limited edition of 3,000 hardback copies, each with a colour plate signed and numbered by Harlan Ellison. This will only be available from specialist shops.

Published by Baronet Publishing
8½''x 11''. 96 pages. £4.25

THE DEVILS OF D-DAY
by Graham Masterton

There are many people who believe that during the Second World War the Third Reich used Black Magic to aid their cause. Masterton's book is based on the very simple assumption that if they could, the Allies could too.

The story is set in the present time and recounts the horrors that beset a young American when he releases one of the Allies' demons from a tank in which it has been imprisoned since 1944.

I was alone and it was late at night when I begen reading this book: initielly the etmosphere created by it did nothing to put me in *a* relaxed frame of mind but, regrettebly, my uneasiness was dispelled once I reached the final chapters. There was so much happening during the final stages of the story that it very quickly became unbelievable, and this is a fault that I have found in his earlier

novels. Masterton's previous works include **The Manitou** and **Charnell House**—they have both sold well and he obviously has a following, but there are others who can scere so much better.

Published by Sphere Books.
192 pages. 85p.

COLD WAR IN A CDUNTRY GARDEN
by Lindsay Gutteridge

It would be easy to dismiss **Cold Wer** as just another gimmicky spy story if the author had not taken the trouble to build his premise

carefully. The book's central character is Matthew Dilke and he is a pioneer in an experiment to help solve the problems created by the populetion explosion: he has volunteered to be reduced in size until he is only 6mm tall.

The first half of the book deals with the problem that he (and later the group that joins him) meets whilst adjusting to his new height and trying to survive in his own beckgarden. It is quite likely that the story could have ended up reading like an unused **Land Of The Giants** episode but Gutteridge has obviously done his research and relates the struggle for survival in an entertaining and informative fashion.

The latter third of the book finds Dilke and his companions sent behind the Iron Curtain by the needs of the British Secret Service: even here the more obvious pitfalls and cliches have been avoided.

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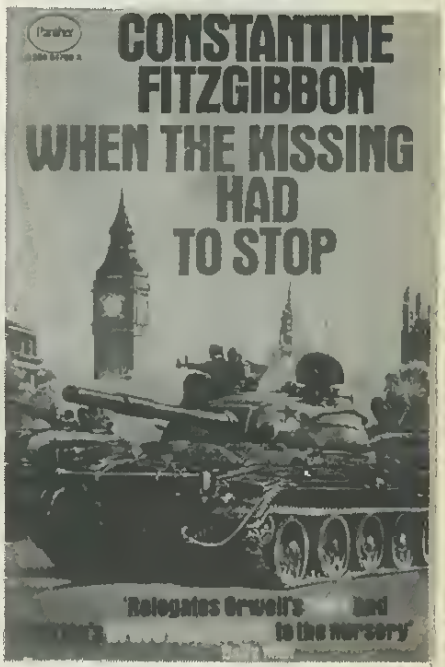

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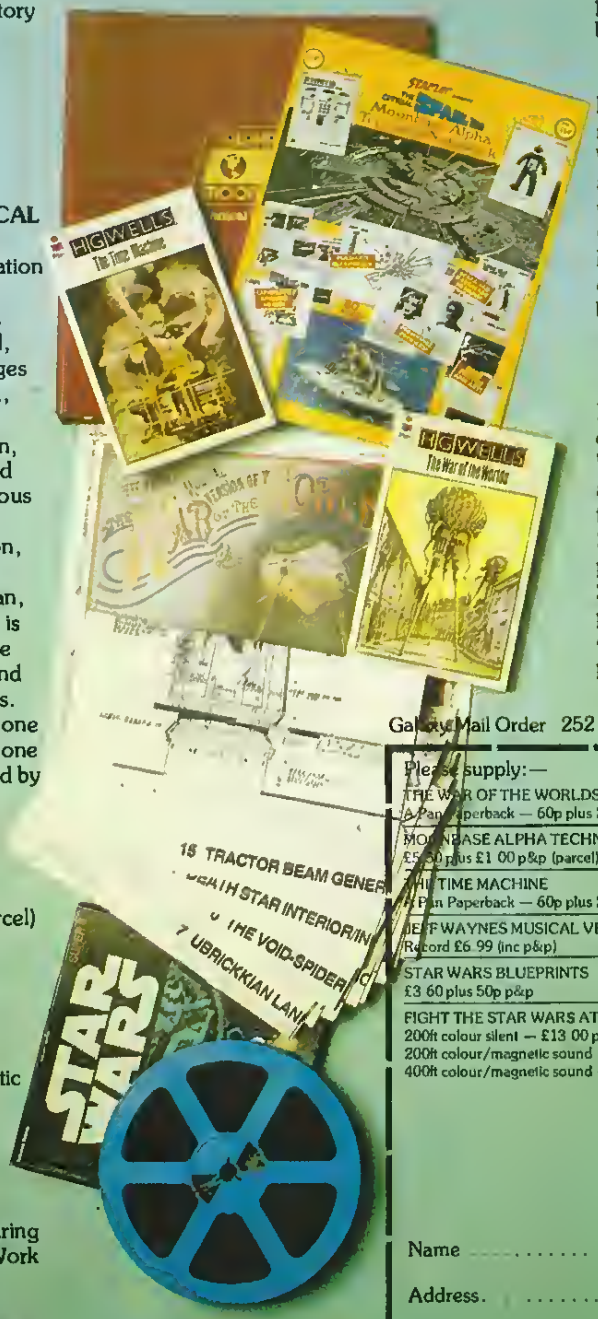

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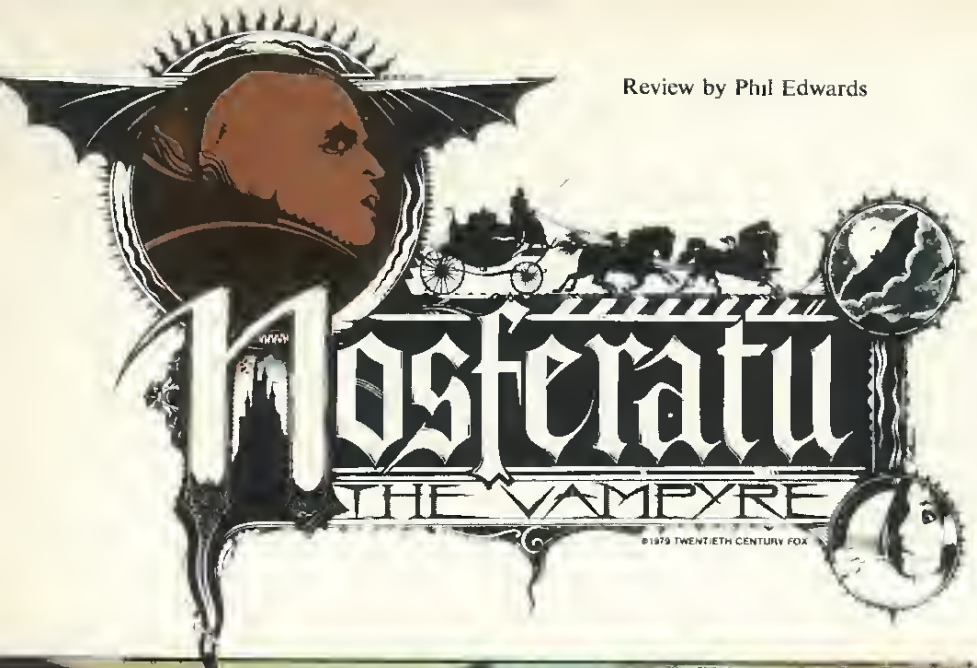


Review by Phil Edwards

Though *Starburst* is basically devoted to Science Fiction, there are times when we feel we ought to bring to the attention of readers other, more mainstream fantasy films, as we did with "*The Manitou*" in issue 8.

Nosferatu the Vampyre is a film that should be seen by all fans of the fantastic, for it is precisely that, a superb fantasy treatment based not so much on the original *Dracula* novel, but on the classic 1922 German film **Nosferatu, A Symphony of Terror** directed by F. W. Murnau.

The new version directed by Werner Herzog, one of the German New Wave film-makers, is perhaps the most perfectly realised film yet based on the Vampire legend. Forget the histrionics of Lugosi, the gentlemanly sophistication of John Carra-

dine, the blood - drenched fangs of Christopher Lee, and all other actors who have played the dreaded Count of the Carpathians.

Herzog has captured the look of Murnau's original and refashioned it with such sumptuous style and clarity of vision that once seen, the film will never be forgotten. However, don't be mislead—the film is not a blood feast and the basic story of Dracula is so well known that it is impossible to imbue it with any real suspense.

Every shot in **Nosferatu the Vampyre** is superbly designed and lit, from the opening tracking shot along a line of mummified bodies to the last shot of Jonathan Harker riding along a windswept beach to spread the plague of the vampire.

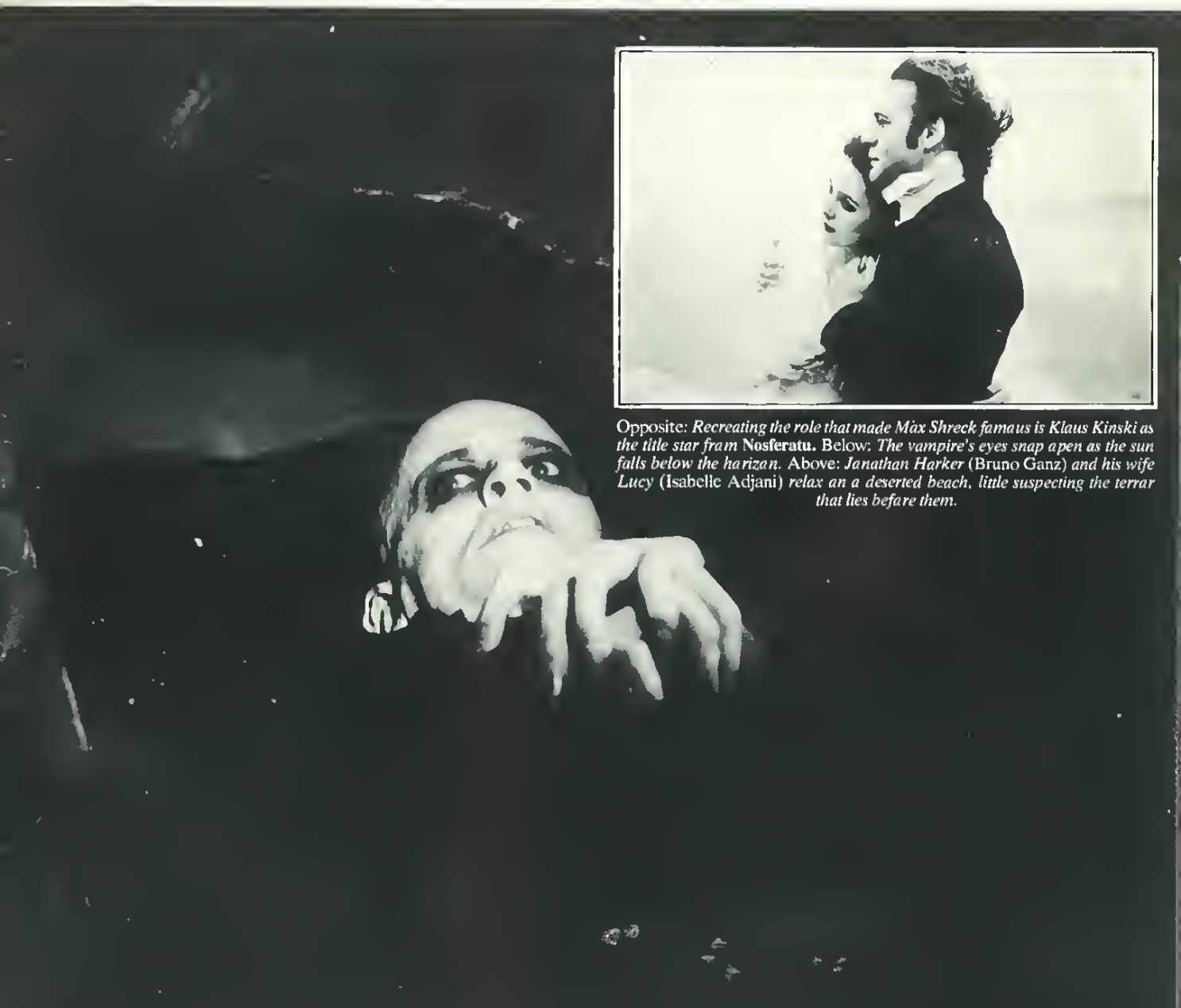
Though Herzog duplicates several shots from Murnau's version, the film is in no way a homage. He makes no excuses for the use of florid acting styles. He is presenting us with a past age and period detail is wonderfully preserved, though never thrust at the viewer.

Performances are uniformly excellent. The beautiful French actress, Isabelle Adjani, as Lucy Harker, is particularly effective. Once she discovers the cause of the apparent plague in Weimar, she becomes a woman of action, trying in vain to discover the lair of Dracula, and ultimately gives her life to help destroy the vampire. Van Helsing (*Walter Ladengast*) is little more than a bumbling fool of a man, refusing to believe in the legend of the undead. Roland Topor makes a fine Renfield, gibbering away in the asylum, collecting flies to eat and fawning to his master like a dog. Bruno Ganz as Jonathan Harker ranges from the loving husband to the "new" Nosferatu with great skill.

However, it is Klaus Kinski as The Vampire who will remain in the memory forever. His is also the most sympathetic portrayal of the oft-played part. His speech in which he tells Harker that there are things worse than death, the futility and despair of living forever, is very moving. Physically, his makeup is based on that of Max Shreck in the 1922 version, but is more believable. Repellent, yet with a strange fascination of its own, it is not possible to detect faults in it at all.

The film is a feast for the eye and the ear. German group, Popol Vuh, have supplied a wonderful score, using acoustic guitars, sitars and assorted percussion to create aural moods to match Herzog's hypnotic images, photographed by Jorg Schmidt-Reitwein.

Nosferatu the Vampyre is a rare treat, a film that makes a pleasant change of pace from the sf films, both good and bad,that have followed in the wake of **Star Wars.**



Opposite: *Recreating the role that made Max Shreck famous is Klaus Kinski as the title star from* **Nosferatu.** Below: *The vampire's eyes snap open as the sun falls below the horizon.* Above: *Jonathan Harker* (Bruno Ganz) *and his wife Lucy* (Isabelle Adjani) *relax on a deserted beach, little suspecting the terror that lies before them.*

The Humanoid. Full review ~ see page 21.

Starburst
11 (1979)

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